The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GILBERT R. CALLAWAY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is the 28th of April, 1999. This is an interview with Gilbert R. Callaway. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's begin at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born, and something about your family?

CALLAWAY: I was born in Memphis, Tennessee in July, 1938. My father was working at a bank in Memphis at the time. He also worked on a couple of occasions for an uncle who lived in Mississippi so before I really had too many early memories we had lived both in Memphis, Tennessee and in a small little town south of Clarksdale, Mississippi by the name of Mattson. By small I mean really small, two [cotton] gins and one mile in between and not much else.

Q: Was this in the center of the state?

CALLAWAY: Mattson is near Clarksdale which is in the Delta. Some of the earliest memories are of going to school in literally a one room schoolhouse in which each row was a grade. The teacher would teach the first grade and go to the second row which was the second grade. When I was in second grade we moved to Forrest City, Arkansas and my father opened his own business as a public accountant. There I lived until I went away to college.

Q: What do you recall about the Delta? Do you have many impressions of the Delta?

CALLAWAY: My impressions are mixed because I still to this day have relatives living there. My father's sister lived in this small town. She was married there and lived there until she died. A little further over in what is called the hill country of Mississippi, I had another aunt and uncle, and my father's parents, in a little town by the name of Oakland. It was bigger than Mattson by about 450 people, meaning there were about 500 people. There were a lot of trips there during childhood and growing up. Even now I go back to see some cousins.

There's been a lot of research done on civil rights, going from a terribly segregated and accepted kind of atmosphere and situation - you just didn't think about it growing up in it - to having seen a good deal of legal process with still a lot of social retardation in that area. That is my observation to this day.

Q: As little kids was there much intermixture at the little kilevel?

CALLAWAY: You mean between blacks and whites?

Q: Yes.

CALLAWAY: We played with them. As I say it was a small town. You did not go to school with them because the schools were segregated. In the fields or after school you would play games and so on. There was certainly no social intermixing but I knew some and would ride on mules with them and run around the fields.

Q: What was your mother's background?

CALLAWAY: As she likes to tell me - my mother is still living - my mother's family is probably where I got my wandering itchy feet. Her father had come from the southern part of Illinois from a little town named Peoria in the Springfield area. He had done a bit of everything. He was a watch repair man. He drove a streetcar. He homesteaded in South Dakota in a sod hut out there. He went to St. Louis and drove a street car because he thought it would be fun to be there during the World's Fair. He went to Oklahoma when they opened up some of the oil fields there and worked as a roustabout there in the fields. He just kept moving.

He finally settled down when my mother and her younger sister were in their late teens, in Arkansas in another little bitty hole in the wall by the name of Heth, Arkansas. It is also in the Delta in the eastern part of the state. He took up farming and stayed there in that area until he died. This is how my father from Mississippi and my mother from Arkansas were introduced by people from Memphis and so the tri-states came together to my benefit.

Q: How old were you when you moved to Heth?

CALLAWAY: To Forrest City. Heth was where my grandparents lived. I was in the second grade so I must have been about seven or eight years old.

Q: So you were there quite a while?

CALLAWAY: Yes. I finished high school in Forrest City. Forrest City is a town of about 15,000. It is about 45 miles west of Memphis and about 90 miles east of Little Rock on the road in-between. It's an interesting town. It is named after Nathan Bedford Forrest because after the war he went into the railroad business and extended the railroad from Memphis over to Forrest City. It was first named Forrest Camp.

Q: What was it like growing up there?

CALLAWAY: As I say it was a town of about 15,000. It was an agricultural service community. This is in the Delta. The people around there are mostly farmers, some large and some small, and the town served them. My father kept books and did income tax returns; that was the kind of accounting that he did for banks and businesses in the area. It had a segregated high school. The black high school was called Lincoln High and the other one was called Forrest City High.

Q: Forrest was a slave dealer in his early years before.

CALLAWAY: Forrest was one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan. As I say, looking back on it, you see many of the faults and the social conflicts and the injustices that were going on. We were not a wealthy family though we were not a poor family. We were very much medium class. When we first moved there we started out by living in what was known as a garage apartment in which your garage is downstairs and about two rooms are above that. Slowly, as my father built his business up, he built a larger brick house and we moved into that. It was a very pleasant childhood. I was happy in school work and happy in the friends I had there.

You look back on it and say there are many disadvantages of living in a small town. My sister, having moved away, has returned to that small town. Jumping ahead and philosophizing a bit, her first husband died when he dropped dead of a heart attack at the age of 39 and she was left with two pretty small children. She said a small town can be very interfering and very intrusive into your private life but when something like that happens, it was a wonderful community. They all came together. They helped out very much both psychologically and in other ways to help this family. I see both of those aspects in my town. My sister and my mother still live there so I get back several times a year.

Q: What about at school, first in the elementary, what sort of appealed to you in elementary school? Any particular studies?

CALLAWAY: This is something that haunted me through college because I thought I wanted to be a scientist. I loved physics, the various maths, and so on, and I really thought I wanted to be a physicist. This was my great desire. I will never forget the science teacher in high school who was one of the teachers in that small town that I admired the most. I went to him one day because he seemed to know the answer to everything. I really thought physics can explain so much and this is wonderful. I asked him, "You know Mr. Bratton, I really don't understand E=MC squared," and he said, "Neither do I." I was taken aback by his honesty and the fact that he had put some feet of clay around one of my idols. I enjoyed that. I was very active in high school plays, art clubs. To this day I regret that I wasn't very interested in music because I think that is a great thing.

Q: What about reading? Did you have any particular reading that yoliked to do?

CALLAWAY: In high school I can't really recall, nothing comes to mind. Later in college, when it became obvious that science was not my forte, I acquired, and still retain to this day, a great interest in history books, in historical novels and in straight history. I do a lot of reading about that. Because we lived close to Mexico when I was growing up - I suppose this is part of some interest in Latin America which also pursued me into college and into graduate school. There were the braceros and wet backs. The farm laborers in the area would bring up hundreds and hundreds of Mexicans, entire families.

Q: They would be wet backs because they were illegal aliens.

CALLAWAY: That's right, some were brought legally and wet backs refers to those who swim across. I got to know some of those people and would speak broken Spanish to them. Later in life when I was in college I actually boarded a bracero bus in Arkansas and rode it all the way down into Mexico with a bunch of laborers returning to their homes. I then went on to tool around Latin America doing some research on a master's thesis at the time. There were aspects of a small town that were international which I suppose put the seeds in one way or another into all of us who moved into this career.

Q: You graduated from high school in what year?

CALLAWAY: '56.

Q: Did the Little Rock Central High School hit when you were there?

CALLAWAY: It was in '57.

Q: Where were you?

CALLAWAY: I was at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

Q: Why Rice?

CALLAWAY: The main reason is that I got a full scholarship to go to Rice but in those days that meant simply being accepted. Rice had been very heavily endowed by a wealthy Texas oil man and real estate speculator, William Marsh Rice. Rice had set up an educational institution and he stipulated in his will, "for the education of poor white boys at the secondary school level." Now that is not what Rice University is today by any stretch of the imagination. They kept breaking his will over the years. When I went there in '56, everybody had a full scholarship. You applied to Rice, you were accepted, and there was no tuition. I joined the army ROTC and they even had a small stipend there that helped defray some other expenses. It was a good school. It was very good in sciences and that was what I still thought I wanted to do at the time.

Q: I was there about three weeks ago and looking at some of thbuildings with big presses, and lots of machinery, and all.

CALLAWAY: Ed Djerejian, whom you probably know, is now heading thBaker School down there.

Q: Yes. When you were at Rice, how did you find it? What sort omoved you off the science track?

CALLAWAY: Flunking calculus and a few things like that. It's a wonderful way of focusing the mind, not quite facing the firing squad. I found it much too rote for what I wanted. You learned the math. You learned the calculus. You learned the biology. I suppose I didn't want to feel that bound and it showed in my grades. As a matter of fact I wasn't even accepted as a physics major. They said, "You can transfer if you do well in some of the basic courses."

The other interest I had at the time was art. Rice didn't have art. Rice was very scientifically oriented. The Baker Institute, or whatever it is called, didn't exist. It was heavily scientific so the next best thing was architecture. I was enrolled as an architecture student and I actually pursued that for a couple of years until that became too scientific. It was very heavy on engineering and I was much more into the design side of things.

Rice was a tough row for me. It was a tough school. They had an attitude back in the '50s and '60s - and I think a lot of schools had dropped this attitude - but I think it was an attitude... We were called together as the freshman class of I've forgotten how many, a couple of hundred. It was a small school. There were only about 1,800 students entirely at the time I was there and it is not even double that now; it is still a small school. We were called together and the dean of students got up and said, "Look to your right and look to your left, one of you is going to be gone in a year. We are going to see to it." I don't agree with that philosophy of education. I didn't then, and I still don't.They lived up to their promise and I suppose sheer stupidity and stubbornness kept me in that school. I said "By damn I'm going to finish this place. I'm going to get a BA out of here then get the hell out of here." I did finally in sociology. In terms of classical style education, I went from two years solid of architecture, to a sociology degree, and then actually I got a degree in philosophy when I finally got out of there. It was a tough school. I didn't like Houston and I still don't like Houston. Forgive me if you're from Houston. It is one of the hottest, wettest places I've ever been in my life.

Q: I must say today's downtown with the skyscrapers is the mossterile place I have ever seen in my life.

CALLAWAY: Yes, it is incredible, isn't it.?

Q: I find it really incredible. I mean it is just very forbidding. I'm sort of looking up at tall building and walking the streets there and it is just awful.

CALLAWAY: There is not much sense. The Buffalo Bayou is not a bad little spot of green there but it is nothing compared to San Antonio which is a charming town.

Q: What about social life there, how did you find it?

CALLAWAY: Social life in high school was a hell of a lot more rewarding. It was a small group, a small town. High school was easy for me scholastically so there was a lot of time. College was exactly the opposite and most people at Rice were very, very dedicated.

Q: I guess it was mostly men, wasn't it?

CALLAWAY: Yes. It is better now but at that time it was more than three quarters male. They were in the college system which was a residential dorm and you ate together and so on. There were something like four men's colleges and one woman's college so that was the division. The women were in at ten o'clock at night, and there were curfews and all which we find hard to believe these days. There were no fraternities which appealed to me because I had been in a high school fraternity and began to think it was kind of silly. It was also part of this study, study, study, atmosphere.

Football players were as we all know a special breed back then. They were in Rice but there was the athletes' math class, athletes' chemistry class, and so on. I roomed with some and it was an interesting experience. I roomed with almost semi-professional football players. I never had that kind of experience before. One roommate was from Washington, DC and another was from New York City. It started to broaden a pretty provincial background.

Q: Did you all get involved with the politics of the times?

CALLAWAY: No. Remember these were the '50s. I graduated in '60.

Q: The silent generation.

CALLAWAY: Absolutely, and it really was. There was very little interest in what was going on. I was still interested in Latin America and traveled to Mexico a couple of times while we were down there and into the southwest, but it was that kind of thing. It wasn't the great issues. The demonstrations that I remember at Rice were about raising the fees in the cafeteria and things like that. There was student activity but it wasn't in the great issues of the day as came along in the '60s.

Q: Why Mexico and why Latin America? Was it exotic or was it just something different?

CALLAWAY: As I said there was part of that background of being close to Arkansas, and having known some Mexicans, having traveled down there when I was in high school. I studied Spanish. I liked my Spanish teacher in high school. I continued to study Spanish while at Rice. And then there was the proximity. It was easy to get to. By the time the '60s were coming along, as you will recall we were talking about the "Alianza para el Progreso" [Alliance for Progress] and this was a coming area of the world, it's going to be our neighbor, and we are going to develop, and so on. I can remember arguing with friends who were specializing in Soviet studies and I would say, "Latin Americans is the coming place to be."

Q: Did you have any jobs or anything like that outside of ROTC?

CALLAWAY: When I was in school I did during the summers. I went back and worked in my father's office one summer, and I worked in a bank in this small town. I went out to Colorado one summer and worked in Rocky Mountain National Park which was a wonderful experience and I'll never forget it. I made a lot of friends out there and enjoyed the hiking. It was a real dude ranch where people really knew horses, really knew trails, and that sort of thing. Once again, I hadn't had that much in my background, so it was a tremendous experience. One summer in order to make up for the calculus and other things, I went to summer school at what was then Southwestern and what is now Rhodes in Memphis, Tennessee. When I got into graduate school, I worked at the Special Operations Research Office [SORO] which is part of American University.

Q: You graduated in 1960?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Whither and what were you thinking about doing?

CALLAWAY: By that time I had two favorite teachers there at Rice. One a history professor and the other was a history of religions professor. I was active in the Presbyterian youth group there and went to a couple of conventions. I visited Chicago, that forbidden land for a lot of southerners, for the first time in my life. I went to Lake Forest and met Adlai Stevenson, after he had been the candidate, of course. That was a wonderful experience. I was sort of toying between going into religious studies, but the other professor who really influenced me a lot was a history professor. I decided that I really wasn't sure.

Since my father had saved so much money on no tuition at Rice, he agreed to fund graduate school. I went to the National University of Mexico in Mexico City for a summer course between school and graduate school. It was close; I spoke some Spanish; I was interested in the area. That sort of really swayed me in the direction of international relations. I decided that if I was going to go into that, I should choose the place to study, rather the geographic location. I chose Washington. I said I wanted to go to Washington. Definitely that's the place to go if you are going to study international relations.

I applied to all the universities and the best deal I got was American University. George Washington (GW), I think, offered me something. I don't think I got into Georgetown. Anyway, the School of International Service was fairly young at the time. Ernest Griffith was the dean and had a tremendous reputation from a lot of activities. I met him, talked to him, interviewed with him personally, and was very impressed. Harold Davis was the head of the Latin American department and he was an impressive man. That sort of led me to prepare myself with Mexico. I did some history and language studies down there that summer, and then came up to American University.

Q: At the University of Mexico, did you pick up any feel for the Latin American educational form, I mean the culture, as opposed to the American one or was it pretty much sort of a summer school for Americans?

CALLAWAY: It was a summer school for the Americans but we lived in a Mexican home; we didn't stay in a dorm. We lived with a family and we would practice our Spanish and talk with them at night about our experiences. It wasn't for Americans alone. It was basically language training for foreigners but I took some courses which were in Spanish with other students. We also traveled quite a bit.

We traveled on that particular occasion all the way down the Pan American Highway to Costa Rica in a beat up old Volkswagen that a friend of mine had down there. We ran into a cow in Honduras or Guatemala, I've forgotten now, and memories come back to you about being scared to death in the middle of the night when we ran into the cow. The car was on fire and all of a sudden we were surrounded by a bunch of people. There were no lights at all. We thought we were in the middle of nowhere and we thought we've had it. They said, "It's not our cow. It belongs to the big landholder here. We'll take the cow and we'll help you get your car out of here." We were saved. It was interesting and it was something which stuck with me.

You sort of relate your own experiences to the very roteness of higher education in many of these Napoleonic-influenced countries. You choose to be an engineer and that is basically all you study at the graduate level, and we noted that. We were down there studying history, language, cultural studies, and so on, and there were Mexican students who were studying nothing but civil engineering and very little else in their careers. It was sort of a wake up call for the appreciation of our more liberal arts and widely varied education. It was a good experience, particularly the traveling part.

Q: You were at American University from 1960 to when?

CALLAWAY: Actually off and on from 1960 until 1965. I got two degrees out of there. I got a masters degree in Latin American studies in '63 and then completed course work while I was in the military. I went into the military in '63. I did ROTC and deferred it until '63 while doing graduate work and working part-time at SORO, which was a research arm of American University. I don't know if part of it still exists. I still think they have what is called the Foreign Area Studies Division that does the area handbooks.

Q: I think they do.

CALLAWAY: This was a part of it. This was where I met my wife. She worked in that part and I worked in another section of SORO. I went into the military in '63 and continued to study. I got a masters of international studies in international relations in '65, the year I got out of the army. I sort of continued that relationship. It was fortunate, though I didn't think it was fortunate at the time because I wanted to go overseas with the military, I still had that itch. The closest I got to going overseas was getting based right back here at the Pentagon in the Latin America area again. As a matter of fact I was right here. Their intelligence agency was in Arlington Hall.

Q: We are in now the Foreign Service Institute, which was the olArlington Hall.

CALLAWAY: I knew it well. Of course there were the old buildings which I guess were further over here at the time. I considered it fortunate to be related to Latin America. We were doing research on Cuba which was still a pretty hot topic at the time. I got to do some interviews with some Cuban ï¿½migrï¿½s, escapees. I did those kinds of interviews and so on. That was interesting.

I contributed to the project from what I was doing for American University and also, the masters thesis... I'm trying to think which year I traveled. I think it was just before I went into the military, various friends and I, but one of them stuck with me the whole time, traveled throughout Latin America for about six months. I did my thesis on the politically active student. What I did was I conducted interviews with student leaders in four countries, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Argentina.You were talking earlier about the lack of student activity at Rice during the '50s and the great difference as the '60s began to develop, particularly in Latin America and in Mediterranean societies, in Italy, Spain, and in other places, a great deal of activity. That sort of formed the basis for that trip that I took just before I went into the military for two years. I then did the military. After that I was fortunate to get a job with INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] at the Department of State on a contract basis doing research on the Latin American military.

Q: Before we move ahead, what were you getting from the students? I always have the feeling that the Latin American students could do whatever they wanted on campuses and student activities were usually heavily dominated by university Marxists but as soon as they got out they went off and became bankers, or the equivalent thereof. What were you finding?

CALLAWAY: You did certainly find that and I interviewed students who were ex-student leaders as well as current student leaders. Of course the current student leaders tended not to accept that. "Well I'll be different. I won't do that. I will continue to serve the good." But I think in general terms the way you described it is accurate. They would tend to be leftists. They would tend to be socialist Marxist, and they would say that though they wouldn't necessarily admit to being communists. I think in their own minds it wasn't admitting to it, they just didn't think that they were. They didn't necessarily think that the Soviet Union was a model to follow and they certainly didn't think the United States was a model to follow. But they felt somewhere was a third road, a development of a socialist society. A lot of it had to do with the social injustice that was quite easy to see around them, and it was certainly there, and they tended to blame it on the United States. "You dominate the area. You dominate the economy," they said.

We can jump ahead and then go back again. My first Foreign Service assignment was as a student affairs officer; something that the Kennedys had started. I was a cultural affairs officer but dealing mainly with students, both university and high school students, in Venezuela. Once again I thought I was very fortunate, my first Foreign Service assignment was exactly in the area that I wanted to go to and in a country where I knew some people because I had done this research. I knew some of the, by that time, former student leaders, but clearly it would be an entree into that world.

They were very dedicated to changing society. Some of them were very poor students and some were very wealthy students and it was kind of egalitarian in that once you were in the university you didn't draw social distinctions. Once you got out and went to work for Creole, which was the Esso-Exxon owner of a large part of petroleum resources productions in Venezuela at the time, it became a different matter. But at that point if you were in a particular political party or in a particular political movement then you cut across the economic barriers that existed in the society.

Venezuela more than a lot of the countries that I dealt with - perhaps because of the petroleum domination by U.S. companies at the time which subsequently have been nationalized, but it was a peaceful nationalization after I served there - tended to look at the United States thinking that if you would allow us to have more control over our economic resources here, we could then make this a more just society. No matter how much you talked to some of them, it was very difficult to persuade them that some of the first steps had to be their own, not the United States.

Their conviction that Marxism was an answer, was one of the reasons that after Venezuela I said if we are going to continue to try to deal with these future leaders of these developing countries, who by and large identify themselves with Marxism, I want to go where it really exists. I got myself assigned to Eastern Europe, to Yugoslavia because I said, "I think we have to know what we are talking about." At that stage in my life, I had never even traveled to any of the socialist countries. A lot of those students hadn't either, but some of them had and they would tell you what a wonderful experience it had been going to a summer school in Budapest and how wonderful society was in Prague, and I couldn't rebut them. I think a lot of it was youthful enthusiasm but to be very honest with you, as we look at Latin America today, there is still a lot to be done down there today and we need a lot more idealism.

Q: Well let's go back a bit. After you got out the Army, had yoreceived your two masters degrees?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: And you got this contract with INR?

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: Were you married by this time?

CALLAWAY: Yes. I was married in '64 while I was in the Army.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

CALLAWAY: She had grown up mainly in the Chicago area. Her father was a businessman and had worked for a variety of companies. He worked for Bausch and Lomb, and for a number of places. He was mainly a management consultant so he had lived in a variety of places, but for most of her formative years in high school until she went off to college, she lived in the Chicago area. She then came to Hood College in Frederick for her first two years. It was a girls school at the time. Frederick, as she described at the time, was about 1,000 miles from Washington; a very small little town. She transferred to American University and we met both in some classes and then working for SORO at American University.

Q: When you were in INR, what were you working on? It was 1965-66?

CALLAWAY: Right. It was a project with Professor Karl Schmidt, a professor from the University of Texas. He was a specialist in Latin American studies. He was the chair of the project and he had several people working for him, some Foreign Service officers and some contracts. I've forgotten how I linked up with him. It was probably some reference from the army or maybe American University, I can't remember. He brought me onto his team. The project was somewhat related to the study I had done on the Latin American students but this was on the Latin American military. What's their mind set? What motivates them? Why do they go into this career? How do they feel about coups d'etat? All this sort of thing. It was basically an unclassified sociological study with interviews, reading files, and so on.

Q: What were we coming out with at that time? In the first place, did there seem to be a military class in Latin America that could identify from one country to another country, or was each country sort of different?

CALLAWAY: That's a good question. I don't know. We drew parallels because of common Hispanic backgrounds, relatively recent independence in the 1800s for most of the countries in Latin America, efforts of forming unions, the Central American Pact and so on, in which there was collaboration, then breaking apart and again collaboration. Memory dims but as I recall except for specific regional agreements in some cases, the military didn't cooperate that much. More likely it was a rivalry situation. You had a whole history. Ecuador and Peru, up until this day, even though they may have had similar mind sets, they were very nationalistic and defend the flag, the fatherland, the motherland. This little strip of land that nobody really cares about except on the maps - the military would say, "We will defend this." It was mainly a feeling, I think, that they were bringing law and order to the country and the military felt that they would establish a certain stability to society and in a lot of ways that preserved the powers and the interests that be.

Q: What was the feeling in the '65 to '66 period, that this is hoLatin America is going to be basically governed most of the time?

CALLAWAY: No, I don't think so really. As mentioned earlier, you were still in the Lyndon Johnson administration and this was a heritage of the Kennedy administration. The Alliance for Progress was still active, if not as active. Johnson of course was being further drawn into the Vietnam War in another part of the world but with his Texas background and from the legacy of the Kennedy administration I think there was still a lot of hope for Latin America. If you recycle the themes enough, you can hear about the development of democracy in Latin America today and how all but one country is democratic, and there was talk about that.

We were marching toward a more democratic society, toward free and unfettered elections. That was an effort to bring the military into line with that and of course with all of the criticism of the infamous School of the Americas, the effort of the military at the time was to train military leaders in democratic thoughts and make them feel responsible, but also under civilian authority. I think that was the ambiance at the time that we would move gradually, and with deliberation, away from more authoritarian societies into more democratic ones.

Q: How were we explaining this military dominance practically over an entire area except for Mexico? Why Mexico? Why was its military kept off to one side successfully?

CALLAWAY: That's a good question. Mexico likes to say, and of course you have heard it as frequently as I have, that they are the only country that, aside from the independence movement, underwent a revolution when they threw out Porfirio Diaz and had Zapata, Carranza, Pancho Villa, and the others. This was a true revolution and then they went about establishing the permanent revolutionized party, Partido Revolucionario Institucional. This is what people are squabbling about today; can you have an institutionalized revolution?

I think that the effort to diminish the clerical influence in Mexico, along with that revolution, continues until today. I haven't been to Mexico for several years, but I understand that you are beginning to see more clerical frocks in the streets now. But when I was down there studying in the summer of 1960, you didn't see nuns in habits, you didn't see priests on the road, or very few. I think that the whole idea of a hierarchical military and church, that Mexico felt that they had somehow broken with their these various revolutionary movements. How true, we are wondering today.

Q: Did the stint in INR attract you towards the Foreign Service ohad you thought about it before?

CALLAWAY: I thought about it before. As a matter of fact, when I was in graduate school I took the Foreign Service exam and passed it. I was offered an assignment and chose to defer it. I said, "I'm not ready yet. I want to do some more studying. I want to do some more traveling." The stint in INR, I felt, was interesting, but it was sort of like being in Venezuela and having to talk on a daily basis with Marxists. I want to know what it is really like and join the Foreign Service. Fortunately, I was able to renew the earlier offer and said, "Okay, I'm ready now." I joined in 1966.

Q: Did you go into USIA?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Why USIA? Was there a choice?

CALLAWAY: There was a choice. As you know, the history of the Foreign Service, we've gone back and forth between FSOs and FSIOs and FSRs and everything. At that time I was a commissioned Foreign Service officer and all I did was check a box. The reason was that when I was doing research on the politically active students throughout Latin America, I was still very interested in Latin America and wanted to go to that area. The most helpful people had been student affairs officers and they were USIS people. I thought they were closer to the society, they knew more of what was going on in the schools and in the various institutions, and so on. I liked working with people.

I liked the politics, too. To be a political officer appealed to me but I had no interest in the economic side of things. I decided that if I don't like this, I am an FSO and I can become a political officer the next time around. I went into it and was fortunate to get an assignment to Venezuela as student affairs officer which I liked very much. The next assignment that I asked for in Eastern Europe came along and USIA came through again, so I decided to stick with them.

Q: What was you Foreign Service basic officer course like and thpeople in it?

CALLAWAY: It was an A-100 course. We were all together. There must have been maybe 25 or so State Department officers and about a dozen USIA officers in the class. There were very few women at that time and from a range of people, some who were just fresh out of school... A wonderful little anecdote that you can throw out I'll never forget. One of my classmates came from Brooklyn. He went to Brooklyn High School, Brooklyn College. You had to give a little talk about yourself in the A-100 class, where you come from, what your background was. This guy gets up and says, "I went here and I went there and yes, I traveled overseas; I went to Jersey once." He was straight out of college.

It was an unusual class. I think there were about four or five Ph.D.s in the class. Roger Morris was in my class. He's become an author since then. Also Frank Hodsoll, who worked for the National Endowments. We had some people with distinguished backgrounds even when they entered the A-100 course. We were a pretty tight group and a number of us still keep up with each other even to this day. It was a broader course I think in a sense because it was an A-100 course, we took the consular aspects of it, and economic. We then got our assignments.

Q: You were in Venezuela from '66 to when?

CALLAWAY: To '69.

Q: What was the political situation like in Venezuela like at thatime?

CALLAWAY: It wasn't that far away from its own revolution or rather democratic coup. Perez Jimenez had been dictator up until, as I recall, something like '58. An admiral had led the coup by the name of Larrazabal. He had tried to install himself as the transition to democracy but he had been rejected and he had allowed elections.

We were in Venezuela for their first transitional elections. In order words, after Betancourt had taken over for the Accion Democratica [AD] Party, the Copeyanos, which were the Christian Democratic Party, was a strong democratic opposition to the Acekos which were more of a Social Democratic Party. The Christian Democratic Party had a lot of ties to European parties and a lot of advice and probably some assistance. The question was, and the whole atmosphere was, whether there would be allowed a democratic transition or whether the AD Party would assume themselves as the carriers of democracy, and want at least one more term.

Of course, a lot of the students that I was dealing with at the university were very leftist and some all the way over to very pro-Castro parties. You'll recall we are not that far away from the Castro revolution in '59. There will still guerrilla groups in the hills in Venezuela. This was when Castro and his cohorts were trying to foment indigenous revolutions in other countries. The embassy had been shot up a number of times and it happened at least once or twice which I was there. People would come by and spray the front of the embassy to indicate that they wanted the Americans out of the country; not only the economic interests but the diplomatic interests as well. There was a lot of foment with this sort of revolutionary process.

You will recall we are talking about the '60s now with the student revolutions going on in Europe and in the United States. After you had Kennedy killed and then in '68 Martin Luther King was killed, Bobby Kennedy was killed, Washington is occupied; you had front page pictures in the major newspaper in Caracas of armed troops in the capital of the United States, it began to look like maybe these students had a point. "We had been telling you, you are no example. Look at what is happening to your society. You are coming apart."

But '68 was also Prague Spring. It was a terrible blow to the Marxist students there. Then they began to say, "We told you we never believed the Soviet Union and their cohorts. This is terrible. Dubcek was the future. The human face of socialism." There was a lot of turmoil both in their philosophy and in how they would interpret that to Venezuela. There was a tremendous amount of activity on the campus. I did a lot of reporting on conversations with students based on what we were all reading in the newspapers, based on what other people were hearing from their senior party officials about what this whole process meant for the future of Venezuela.

At the same time, there was talk about the only way this country can progress is to have more economic independence from the United States. All the major oil companies were there. Not only U.S. companies like Exxon, Mobil, and Texaco, but also Shell. This was how Venezuela was a pretty affluent country at that time. There were certainly huge pockets of poverty in the interior but Caracas was a very wealthy city. It reminded me a little bit of Los Angeles. It was pretty sterile and uninteresting but affluent with big skyscraper buildings. People would see this and say this country has to move and what direction are we going to move in? From my perspective, it was fascinating to try to maintain contacts with as many of the student leaders of the various political parties during this process and to see what their thinking was.

One of the proudest things that I managed to pull off while I was there was to get a group, not the most extreme left and we avoided the most extreme right, but pretty much a rainbow spectrum of student leaders of all the major parties, and send them to the United States on one of these leader exchange programs. We put a dozen of them all on the same plane. They spent three weeks together in the United States. That was the way to not only show what we are really doing up here, but when they come back they have this tremendous kind of rapport among themselves as well.

The Christian Democratic Party won the elections. It was a peaceful transition. Venezuela did not live happily ever after by any means, but a lot of people felt satisfied with the progress at that point.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

CALLAWAY: For the entire time I was there a very professional man by the name of Maurice Bernbaum who had served at least three times in Venezuela before. As he told me he had been the junior consular officer, then he came back as a political officer, and this was his third if not fourth tour. Jumping ahead a little bit, it reminds me that I served under Jack Matlock in the Soviet Union and there were tremendous advantages to seeing a country develop over a period of time.

Bernbaum was a consummate professional Foreign Service officer. He spoke the language well, knew the country well and knew a lot of people. He made a comment one time which I thought was quite interesting that one of the things that he regretted is that as you naturally progress from being a lowly consular officer to the ambassador to the country, you have to leave friends behind. You don't leave them entirely behind but you no longer have that kind of relationship. You simply can't. You are representing your country, your entire mission. He said it was one of the regrets he had about having served so continuously. On the other hand, as I say, he knew the country.

He was a tremendous first exposure to me for an ambassador particularly since, as I was traveling as a student through Central America, I had run into ambassadors - and a number of them I know were political appointees - who I felt were not representing our country best. I was young, hardly a firebrand, but a "we-can-change-the-world" kind of student, and to sit in San Salvador and to listen to the ambassador say, "Well, our interests are with the government that exists here..." I felt that when I got to Bernbaum, there was a man who understood that societies do have to develop and I think he was trying his best to represent both the interests of the United States first and foremost, but also to adequately portray the interests of Venezuela.

Q: Had the Dominican Republic crises where we intervened come uwhile you were there?

CALLAWAY: I was in the military at that time. I was actually detailed to the Pentagon a couple of times in the war rooms during it. I saw that from a different perspective.

Q: I would have thought that as the student affairs officer, to go on some of these campuses it would have been almost dangerous because they'd think, that guy is a CIA agent or something. Did you find yourself having to deal with that?

CALLAWAY: My predecessor had warned me of something that happened to him and I never forgot it, I haven't to this day. He once went to a student rally on the campus of the University Centrale de Venezuela which could become a closed campus. It was a compound and you could close the gates off. It worked in both directions. The military could close the students in, and the students could close whomever they wanted to out. He went to a rally shortly before I got there. It was in a large hall and he didn't tell anybody he was coming. He went on the campus and went into this rally. It was held in an auditorium and he said all of a sudden somebody recognized him and they passed the word. From the stage they said, "In the back row there is a CIA agent." He said he ran out of there and he didn't stop running until he hit the first gate he could come to.

I would either not get myself backed into a corner like that - I probably would have done the same thing, it was hindsight wisdom - or I would have let people know I was coming so that certain people would know I was going to be on campus. I would go on campus and if a large rally was going on I would exercise discretion rather than valor and stay away from the thing. I would always let somebody in the embassy know where I was going to be. I was able to go onto campus pretty unfettered with those exceptions.

The student attitude towards the entire embassy was that we represented the stated interests. What you had to do, as a lot of us do in this business, is establish personal contacts. We've heard this many times throughout our careers, "We like you. It is your government we don't like." That was the kind of relationship. Believe it or not, and I surprise myself when I look back on it, I actually got the political counselor talked into going and giving a lecture on campus about our involvement in Vietnam. Of course, it was a hot debate but it wasn't a violent debate. They didn't refuse to let him come onto the campus. They didn't refuse to let him deliver his talk and they let him have his say. There was enough of a rapport built up. "We don't agree with you but we will listen to you and we think you are honest enough that you will listen to us." For heavens sake, none of us agreed with everything we were doing in Vietnam.

Q: Was the expropriation or nationalization of the oil companies something that everyone was waiting for? Was that something that was expected there?

CALLAWAY: There was certainly a lot of talk about it and I think the main concern was - how it was going to be done? Was adequate compensation going to be offered? The oil companies, as time developed, I think they were ready for it if they could get what they considered to be their fair shake out of the thing. The various political parties cooperated with each other as I say with the exception of the extremes on both ends in terms of saying we want to get as much as we can out of this. This is our natural resource but we don't want to break relations so that they are not going to refine our oil in Aruba or some place. I think that was the main concern.

I came to know some of the people pretty well in the oil companies, too. I was fortunate in that my father-in-law had been a management consultant for the Creole Company in the late '50s. He was there when Perez Jimenez was overthrown so he saw a revolution underway. The director for public relations, who was originally a Czech citizen, and then became a Venezuelan citizen, and subsequently has become an American citizen, was a fellow I knew personally through an introduction of my father-in-law. He introduced me not only to the people who were working on how to make the transition to the nationalization of the oil companies a feasible policy, but to people who had been former student leaders who were now working for Creole so I could get their perspective.

Creole actually sat overlooking a part of the Central University campus. We would sit at the window and say, "You used to sit over there and say we are going to burn that building down someday, and now you are sitting in here. What is your justification?" The students would say, "I was younger. I was impetuous. But now we are working from within the system to try to change the system." Most of them were intelligent enough individuals with a fairly plausible explanation in their own self justification for not being on the ramparts anymore.

Q: I never served in Latin America and when one listens to accounts you have sort of the feeling that the students spent an awful lot of time in political agitation and confrontation. How about studying? What was your impression of the universities as a purveyor of education?

CALLAWAY: You've asked two very good questions really. I can't remember the statistics or the estimated statistics any more, I have them in my paper. Your really politically active students were a small percentage of the overall student population. Most of the students were there to study. They wanted to be there to get an education. A lot of them resented the political activities and would say, "We don't want to go on a strike. You are going to delay our education by six months or a year if you persist in this kind of stuff." We touched upon this a little bit earlier, the whole matter of how good an education they were getting I think is debatable to this very day.

In the '60s, the universities in many of these countries began to open their doors entirely. There were essentially no entrance exams or any kind of an entrance process so that anybody who had not even necessarily graduated from high school, although that was usually the case, could walk into a university and enroll themselves as a student.

To me, what took away equally, if not more, from the pedagogical advantages of the university were the so-called professional students. They weren't necessarily the political students. The education was essentially free. You could get a part-time job and support yourself eating very cheap meals. The student meals were practically free. You were paying less than a buck a day to eat. These were students who would stay there for years as professional students, maybe politically active, maybe not politically active, but truly drawing away from students who were dedicated to getting an education, to getting a future profession. I saw the same thing in the national universities in Italy. There were 35,000 students in Rome and how many of them were real students?

Q: Yes, and also there, no matter how good a degree you got it depended on whom your family knew in order to get a job. That was the tragedy I always felt in Italy because a person could have a superb education and for the most part it didn't mean anything unless his family had connections.

CALLAWAY: Yes. You were going to move into a certain area no mattewhat.

Q: I assume that as the student affairs officer that you couldn'help but be attracted to the political activists.

CALLAWAY: Obviously. Also we had some very good political officers in the embassy at the time. Bill Luers was one of the heads of the political section and he subsequently became ambassador to Czechoslovakia and head of the Metropolitan Art Museum. And Kempton Jenkins, whose name you probably know. These were people that I think appreciated and encouraged a fairly junior, and a fairly young officer, working in these areas they considered important work and work that was to be encouraged with rather than saying, "You go do whatever you like." We worked together very closely and Jenkins had a lot to do with getting my future assignment into the Eastern European area.

Q: He was a Soviet hand.

CALLAWAY: Exactly.

Q: In '69 you left. What did you do? Did you just ask to go tEastern Europe?

CALLAWAY: Yes, and I said why. I said that I think a lot of the future leaders of a lot of these developing countries consider themselves to be Marxist and in some cases have studied in some of these countries, and they've been offered scholarships. I think it is important that we continue to work with them and that it is therefore important that I get some Marxist education. At the time not only were Jenkins and Luers pushing that as well, and both had had some experience in the area, but a guy named Frank Shakespeare, the head of the U.S. Information Agency at the time, was, too. His attitude was that everybody, if you were worth your salt, was going to serve in a communist country because you had to know the enemy.

I got an assignment to Zagreb, Yugoslavia and I said, "Gee, that's great. Where the hell is it?" I didn't know the area that well at the time. Zagreb was something that I didn't even know how to pronounce.

Q: Did you get language training?

CALLAWAY: I got language training though not enough. I didn't get as much as I wanted because like the army, the Foreign Service's attitude was, hurry up and get out there. I came out of Venezuela in something like November and by March of '70 they were shipping us off.

Q: You were in Zagreb from 1970 until when?

CALLAWAY: Until the fall of '72.

Q: What was your job at the consulate general in Zagreb?

CALLAWAY: There were only three Americans in USIS at the time. There was a branch public affairs officer, his deputy, and a junior officer trainee. I was the number two guy. I did a little bit of everything. They called me the deputy branch public affairs officer, a very long title. We tended to divide it because of my background. I did more of the information and press side of things. The other fellow who had had more experience did the Fulbright exchange programs and that sort of thing, which I didn't know that much about; I didn't have that background. We worked very closely together. Dabney Chapman, I don't know if you've got him in here on not, but Dabney is now retired in Shepherdstown. He's not too far away.

Q: Who was consul general at the time?

CALLAWAY: Orme Wilson.

Q: He was very much a Yugoslav hand.

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: He had been desk officer and served in Belgrade. Can you talk about your impression of, well I suppose I would say Yugoslavia but we are really talking about Croatia at the time when you arrived there? This was brand new for you. You hadn't been in Europe before.

CALLAWAY: I had one short trip with the military, but I had never been in Yugoslavia. It was unknown. We had talked obviously with a lot of people, Jenkins, Luers, and others, who had served in that part of the world. I did a lot of background reading and took some courses at GW [George Washington University] and Georgetown before going out there, so from an academic point of view I knew a fair amount about the place. But what really struck us was how non-restrictive it was from what we had anticipated. Then I jump ahead to a subsequent assignment in Moscow where, after Zagreb, we felt we knew what it was like to live in a communist country, and we were knocked off our feet.

In Yugoslavia, you could travel freely and you could go wherever you like. [It was] clear that there were restrictions was not that Tito was a communist. My personal opinion was that Tito had become Tito by that time and this was Tito's country, Tito's revolution, Tito versus Stalin.

When Nixon paid his first visit, I think, to that part of the world, he went to Romania and I think it was on that very same visit, either coming or going, when he stopped off to visit Tito. He came up to Croatia because Tito had been born in Kumrovec, a small little town on the Croatia-Slovenia border. It was a shrine at the time. Tito was very much alive.

An interesting anecdote is that the press advance people - which is mainly who we were working with - are always trying to ensure that the accompanying press corps can practically sit in the lap of the visiting dignitaries. Finally, I had to go over to a guy and say, "Look, there is real security here and you had better believe me that when they say don't cross this line they mean it." The guy kept saying, "We can move up ten more paces. You just go tell them we are going to do this." I would negotiate, and go back and forth. Finally the Yugoslav security guys said, "That's it. No more." I said, "Why no more? Why not here rather than there?" They said, "Because now Tito is coming. We don't care what happens to Nixon. It's your worry." I took him over and translated for the U.S. guy and I said really if you go any further... That was sort of the attitude toward who Tito was, and what he meant to the country.

Then, during the time we were there, there was a relatively peaceful resolution [compared] to the kind of breakdown that we see today. There were a lot of autonomy movements within Croatia at the time, very active in pushing for more autonomy, particularly more economic autonomy. They were not even talking about independence at the time. All of a sudden - and I don't think anybody in Belgrade, Zagreb or anywhere else saw this coming - Tito just said, "That's enough. You are going to jail. You are out of office."

Q: That happened during your time? CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Wasn't there also something, the theater or something, where thCroatian banner came up or something like that?

CALLAWAY: There were incidents like that. People wore the littlpins that you see now, the little checkerboard symbols of Croatia.

Q: I spent five years in Belgrade and my time was '62 to '67. Somehow I realize only long after the time, it was a calm period, but we really were isolated from the nationalism. We were caught up in sort of, the Serbs were there and we were among the Serbs and we didn't get the feeling of other places. They were just seen as, those are just minor local disturbances and all. Did you get a feeling of the divide between Serbia and Belgrade, and Zagreb? Did this sort of permeate your work?

CALLAWAY: As I said it certainly did in the actions that Tito took on the national level, but it went beyond that. It was certainly sensitive at the time but I think a lot of water had gone under the bridge at the time. When I first went there we were able to send in reports directly from Zagreb on what's happening, and how are things developing. As things became very bad, and particularly after Tito made his move to remove certain people from office in Croatia, the embassy decreed that all reporting from Zagreb would go through the mission in Belgrade. This really chaffed us. The feeling was that we had enough maturity. We were reporting. We weren't advocating. The sensitivities continued right up until the time that James Baker traveled out there in '89 or '90, or whenever it was, and said this is one country and that's what we stand by.

Suddenly I am remembering how things were practically 20 years before that and seeing that in many instances we sit in the capital and think that what goes on in Maracaibo in Venezuela doesn't matter that much. I had never served before, and never served since, in a consulate but I thought it was an extremely useful experience in seeing that to many Zagrebchani, we were their embassy even though they never talked about independence. They didn't look to the embassy in Belgrade. They looked to that consulate and that consul general as the representatives of the United States. The attitude that they had toward their part of Yugoslavia, and to be able to express that, sort of without feeling we had to flush it through a Belgrade screening process, was a real comeuppance to me and I think frankly, rest his soul, to Orme Wilson as well.

Q: I think so. It's only in retrospect almost 30 years later that I realize that I really didn't know any Croatians. It wasn't as though if you are here in Washington you meet people from all over the country.

CALLAWAY: Yes, and you don't think anything about it.

Q: Even the Croatians who worked in Belgrade all headed home on the weekends. You were really restricted to a Serb society and there was a certain, I won't to say blindness, but a lack of understanding I think on the part of leadership of what was going on. Although from a practical point of view, nothing really happened for 25 years. Who was our ambassador at the time?

CALLAWAY: It was Leonhart. We can talk about that. Tom Enders was his DCM for part of the time. We have traveled back to Yugoslavia a number of times. We really thoroughly enjoyed the country and we had a lot of friends. We went back most recently in the summer of '90 or '91.

Anyway, some incidents had already happened. As you will recall, at the Plitvice Lakes, some foreign tourists had been killed. Who did it? Was it provoked? Did the Serbs do it to bring shame upon the Croats or did the Croats do it to set up the Serbs? There was a lot of debate about who was behind it, and we talked with friends at the time.I'm sure you get, "You served in Yugoslavia, explain to us what the hell is going on?" My response is, "I served in Yugoslavia and I probably understand less than you do." The kind of people that we dealt with even up until '90, '91, said, "There is going to be trouble. There are going to be hotheads. There is going to be violence. We will not go as far as independence. The economic viability of this country is too important. We have made too much progress. We need to stick together." They sincerely believed it and never would have instigated the kind of stupidity, I think, that has happened since then.

Nor did we see it in those two-and-a-half years that we were serving there... We did know some Serbs and some other people, even more so in Slovenia because people were drawn from the southern parts of the country to come up and work in the factories. Even then Slovenia looked back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire and thought fondly about those days. They wanted to be more economically independent than the Croatians did because they were economically better off. It was the same attitude that you heard in Italy: why is the south pulling all of our funds away from Milan? There were some of the same kinds of arguments. Why are we funding the south because they are lazy people who can't work very hard?

The idea of resorting to war to achieve independence I think was beyond the pale. They thought they had made a tremendous amount of progress. They thought they could live side-by-side. We had a nursemaid who came in and helped us with the kids every once in a while who was very Croatian nationalistic and she used to tell horrible stories about how she would sleep with the dead at night in the fields in order to avoid being slaughtered, reminiscent of the things you hear about Kosovo going on right now. And yet she had neighbors that day who were Serbs. It was in the past for her. It was a horrible past. It was a terrible thing, but it wasn't any part of her planned future.

There are people that I think that we don't see, as diplomats in whatever country. We deal with educated, rational people who, even if they may be communist and disagree with you in terms of what kind of a social system you want to construct, are going to try, as we did with the former Soviet Union, in every way they can to avoid killing each other. We, I think unfortunately, too often tend to neglect the people who are willing to do the kind of hotheaded things that we see today in Yugoslavia.

Q: And that the seeds for the present disaster were sown probably at their mother's knee by telling horror stories, but it just took a Milosevic and a Tudjman to carry this out. Of course another thing too at the time, and you probably felt the same thing, the breakup of Yugoslavia was in a way unthinkable at the time because if it started to break, that meant the Soviet Union could mess in these murky waters and it could bring on World War III. No matter what happened, you felt that this isn't going to happen because of the Cold War; it is just too dangerous for everybody to do that. With the Cold War over, that allowed the opportunity.

CALLAWAY: We tended to forget in the '60s and the '70s when you and I were serving there, what we thought of Tito back in '45, '46, and '47 when he was in Trieste shooting American planes down.

Q: Absolutely.

CALLAWAY: Not the same thing.

Q: How did your job sort of translate? What sort of work were yodoing?

CALLAWAY: As I say, we were dealing mainly with the press and working with the local television stations. We tried to place articles about U.S. society, U.S. economy, in the Vremya, the Yugoslav Croatian paper. We tried to get either interviews, or people, or programs placed on Croatian television programs. We tried bringing exchange students in both directions, students and professors, touring cultural groups, art exhibits, exhibits that we would take out to local cultural centers and set up about the U.S. economy or the latest developments in U.S. art.

A big activity in Zagreb was that every year there was a commercial fair and we worked very closely with the Department of Commerce on that. This was a big deal, and Tito would come every year and inaugurate it. Every year of course we tried to make a good show. We tried to do it somewhat in the same way that we sent the exhibits in the Soviet Union and were able to travel into areas where you normally couldn't travel to in the Soviet Union. This one was a fixed installation and it gave us a presence in the most important second republic, after Serbia, in Yugoslavia at the time.

This was where we put our big effort. We are coming to Zagreb. We are coming to you. It allowed people to see the latest in whatever particular thing we were doing like electronics, or television, or whatever particular kitchen utensils that we were featuring that year. Often they would be spinoffs of shows that had been in the Soviet Union. We would adapt the language.

A lot of it was maintaining contacts with people. The foreign editor of Vremya was getting ready to go as the U.S. correspondent and didn't know English that well, so I got my wife to teach him English. In that way we became close, personal friends and it made it easier to get an occasional op-ed piece and things like that. Naturally, we would set up extensive press coverage for a presidential visit. We would set up various press centers in small towns if they were going to visit Kumrovec, or at the airport, that kind of activity. A lot of it was just trying to be the presence of the American government in Croatia, which they considered to be extremely important.

Q: Were you feeling at all the problem of having extreme Croatian nationalists, particularly in Sweden and other places, and also in Chicago? Did they sort of intrude on your territory at all from time to time?

CALLAWAY: Not really. It was interesting. Once again it was something akin to what we were saying about the kind of people we would deal with. Most of the people that we were dealing with felt that these people went too far. They didn't want to see Croatians setting off bombs in Chicago or demonstrating at rallies. The Serbs, of course, said they were Ustashi. To the extent that that's true or not, I'm sure some of them were. They had fled the country. They had gotten out. You didn't see that many people coming back into Croatia or paying visits back to Croatia to sort of cement a relationship. They were in some ways, as do many ï¿½migrï¿½ groups, reflecting on Italy, or Yugoslavia, or Croatia, which no longer exists, they are remembering what it used to be.

Q: That's like in Cuba today, with the Cuban-Americans today.

CALLAWAY: That's right. It's a society that probably never did exist and never will. After that assignment, we can get to that, I became the desk officer for Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania at USIA and that is where I dealt much more with these Croatian ï¿½migrï¿½ groups. And you are quite right, we don't really think about it much any more. It is a time that has passed. They were active at the time. There were terrorist groups, and there was a concern about them.

Q: What about travel? Was it pretty easy for people to get out oYugoslavia to go to the West and all of that?

CALLAWAY: One of the most fascinating trips I made in our Foreign Service career was sometime around '71, we took a Yugoslav cruise ship and we sailed from Ra_a, I guess. We went to Crete, Egypt, Lebanon, and Beirut. We didn't have diplomatic relations with Egypt at the time. We had to have two passports because we then went to Israel. We went into Beirut before it was destroyed.

There was one other non-Yugoslav couple on the boat, an Italian couple, and we were an American couple. Everybody else on that boat was Yugoslav. They were not terribly wealthy Yugoslavs. It was interesting not only to travel and get to know the Yugoslavs - by that time we were speaking decent Serbo-Croatian - but to see those other countries from the perspective of Yugoslav tourists coming in. It was interesting to see these people going out and seeing through their eyes the other countries, seeing them experience another world. It is the kind of thing that for most of the people we met in subsequent tours and visits in the really restricted Soviet areas was startling because people from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland did travel outside, but they were really part of an elite. You knew that you were very privileged, and you were coming back to that area. But these were Yugoslav factory workers in some cases. They were people who, if they could scrape up enough money to get on that boat, could go. It was heartening to see that.

Q: While you were there did Vietnam intrude much?

CALLAWAY: Vietnam was much more of a presence in Venezuela where I was working with the student groups. Obviously, the Yugoslav attitude was not favorable to our intervention, but if you recall, Tito was one of the great leaders of the third world movement. Tito's idea was to try to resolve that conflict through as much involvement, mediation, and interjection of these other leaders of Indonesia, India, some of the African countries.

There were protests. There were marches and violence in Venezuela. I don't remember one in Zagreb, there may have been a couple of rallies but it was more of a rational kind of discussion. Once again you could sit down and you could talk about Vietnam with them and try to explain some of the efforts at rationale. Their efforts were more, why can't we peacefully resolve this thing, some of the Russian arguments today.

Q: Then you left to go where?

CALLAWAY: I came back as desk officer in the U.S. Information Agency for Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. We had no relations with Albania at the time so the main thing there was the VOA broadcasts.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point? We'll pick it up next time in 1972 when you go back to be USIA desk officer for Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania.

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Today is 11th of May, 1999. Gil, you were USIA officer foYugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria from when to when?

CALLAWAY: From '72 to '74 when I went into Russian language training.

Q: We will talk again about Yugoslavia but what were we doinvis-ï¿½-vis Albania and Bulgaria?

CALLAWAY: We had no diplomatic relations whatsoever with Albania at the time, so what we were trying to do was both reach the people of Albania, and in a sense to try to normalize relations with the communist leaders of Albania at the time, working through the Voice of America. We did have Voice of America programs and depending on how relations were going with the rest of the communist world and what was happening in terms of mainly U.S.-Soviet relations, we would try to do broadcasts which would show that our programs and exchanges, information exchange particularly, would not be particularly harmful or threatening to the regime. On the other hand if relations were not good, then we would try to get the truth, the news, accurate information, into the people of Albania. That was basically the relationship with Albania. It would go up and down largely based, in my personal opinion, on our relationship with the Soviet Union, the great mother communist state.

Q: Wasn't it at that time that Albania had been sort of part of that great dual axis with Albania on one side and communist China on the other side? Albania had gone the course of not repudiating Stalin at that time and neither had China.

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: You were there during our opening to China?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Did that make any difference? Did you have a feeling that we were beginning to take a different look at Albania saying maybe there is some hope here or doing something?

CALLAWAY: A good question. I certainly know very little about U.S.-Chinese relations. China, and that whole area, is not my bag but as I said I certainly saw it in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations. I think that in many cases we would see relations with countries like Albania as satellites of either the Soviet Union or of the People's Republic of China, and view it in those terms. As our relationship with the Soviet Union went up and down, or back and forth, if you will, then relations would either improve or become cooler with such places as Albania or some of the Eastern European countries.

I think what you say about China is probably the same. It was a big deal. It was a big area that we had to deal with. I think we were still concerned, probably right up until 1992, about the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China getting back together. This coalition bothered us and any way that we could see a loosening of ties with any of those countries, or a moving away from one of the great rival powers, I think it was a plus, much as we were talking earlier with Tito in Yugoslavia. We certainly didn't like Tito being a communist but the fact that Yugoslavia moved itself away from the Soviet orbit led us to do business with him. (End of tape)Q: This is tape two, side one with Gilbert Callaway. You were saying...

CALLAWAY: You were asking about Bulgaria and our relationships.

Q: Right.

CALLAWAY: As you will recall, at the time, Bulgaria was seen as the most faithful Soviet satellite. Stalinists tried to do the Soviet Union even better after Stalin left the scene in the Soviet Union in '53. Therefore, particularly from the point of view of the USIA, the desk, and the operations room, we were trying very hard to negotiate a cultural agreement with Bulgaria. We wanted the kind of cultural agreement that we had with the Soviet Union at the time which was foreign exchange of performing arts groups and art exhibits, but particularly more in the educational area where so many students and professors could come to this country and so many could go to the other country. We kept pointing to the fact that we had done this with the Soviets, and the Soviet empire hadn't collapsed so why couldn't we do this with Bulgaria.

Of course, what we wanted to do was to loosen it up. With the Soviets it was always a one-for-one and very strict, varied limits; you can do one or two exhibits that we took into the Soviet Union and bicycle them around to various cities. We wanted to do the same thing in Bulgaria and we wanted a loose relationship, not to say it is going to be one-for-one or only two in the course of a year, but why don't we work this out and see if we can have three or four. We tried to do that with Bulgaria, but it didn't work. We did, during this period that I was on the desk, complete a cultural agreement with the Bulgarians. Little by little we tried to normalize relationships and also make them see a different point of view of the United States.

Q: Did we have a USIA representative in Bulgaria?

CALLAWAY: Yes, we did. It was the same kind of relationship that we had in the Soviet Union. We were not allowed to call ourselves the United States Information Agency or even USIS, the United States Information Service, at the time. In those countries we were called the press and cultural section of the embassy.

Q: How effective was it? I mean was there a library and that sorof thing?

CALLAWAY: There was a library. There were exhibits, and there were educational exchange programs. To the extent that the host communist country would allow it, I think it was extremely effective. That was one of the reasons that they wanted to control it, to keep it within certain bounds and certain limits.

You will recall of course the famous, or infamous, Khrushchev-Nixon debate in the Soviet Union. It took place in one of our exhibits in which Khrushchev basically said, "This is a bunch of propaganda. You don't really have kitchens like this in the United States." Nixon said, "Yes, this is representative of what we have." It sort of went on from there about perceptions and misperceptions of the two countries.

I think that the exhibits that went around the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent the satellite communist countries of Eastern Europe, were extremely effective. The Soviets, Bulgarians, Romanians, and others limited the people who could go to those exhibits, but thousands, and thousands of people went through those exhibits. They had a chance to talk to young American people in their own language and have a relatively open conversation with them, when for the most part all they were seeing was the propaganda that had been coming out from their governments about the United States and the relationships between those countries. Many of the people who have gone into the Foreign Service, I think, started out their careers as guides on those exhibits and felt that they were extremely effective.

Q: Was Bulgaria, for what we were trying to do, really hostile ojust not very receptive? This is a nuance.

CALLAWAY: It is a good nuance. Not having served in Bulgaria, I will refer to my experience in the Soviet Union. At least in the time that we served in the Soviet Union in the mid-'70s, people were told every day that basically every foreigner in the country was a spy of one kind or another, whether he or she be a diplomat, a businessperson, or a correspondent. I think they believed this to an extent because that is all they were told.

The basic reason for the separation was that they could get into trouble if they had too many relations with foreigners, or too frequent a contact with foreigners. They would be questioned at their job and threatened with a demotion, or being fired, or removed and sent out to a small village working on a farm. Or they could be questioned even more threateningly and frighteningly by the internal police force of those countries.

I think that there was probably a very good disposition toward moving away from a strict control of the communist system. My personal theory at the time is that the people had been so indoctrinated by the bad side of capitalism, that they wanted to move somewhere in-between to a socialist kind of system like the Scandinavian states. They certainly didn't want communism, or were very against it. But to go all the way to what they saw as free, unfettered capitalism scared them, I think. There was a lot of curiosity and interest, but it was for moving part way away from what they had, and part way towards what we had.

Q: Here you are in USIA now, how did you find the leadership of USIat that particular time?

CALLAWAY: To be very frank, and we're away from those areas, it was a very Cold War mentality. It harked back to the time that I came into USIA when I was flatly told that I could serve in Vietnam now or later but by damn I was going to serve in Vietnam. That was the attitude. It was felt that this particular conflict was going to go on forever. We were going to be rotating information and cultural types into Vietnam. By the early '70s, we were just beginning to move away from the Vietnam conflict, and we were out by '75.

Our leaders believed that we are going to be dealing with the communist world for the foreseeable time and everybody who is going to make a successful career out of the U.S. Information Agency (I suspect the State Department might have been the same) is going to serve in a communist country. As I mentioned to you earlier in the interview, I wanted to do this. I had been in Venezuela and had dealt with Marxist leaning and leftist students, so it wasn't at all that I was forced to go into this part of the world. I think I tended to believe that we were going to be dealing with the communist Soviet Union for the foreseeable future.

Q: The date of 1992 was not looming over with the breakup of thSoviet Union.

CALLAWAY: It was not on our horizon.

Q: Before we turn to Yugoslavia, did you find much interest in sort of the academic world or artistic world in the United States in Bulgaria? I mean was this someplace where one had to really go out and say, "Gee, fellows, you really have to go to Bulgaria."

CALLAWAY: There was not a great deal of interest. Yugoslavia was different as we both know. It was kind of unique. They had made the break. You could travel there relatively freely. Bulgaria, Romania, these countries, were seen as being very close to the Soviet Union and less interesting. I think in terms of culture, in terms of a common sense of values, people tended to think that Hungary and Czechoslovakia, at the time, were more Western and there was more interest in going to Prague or Budapest. I think that these were sort of on the fringe, though not as far on the fringe as Albania.

Q: Well the cities were more interesting; they were really historic. All I can really remember about Sofia was going to see Dimitroff's tomb.

CALLAWAY: Sort of like Stalin's tomb.

Q: It was sort of as they affectionately called it, the cold meat.Did you have Romania too?

CALLAWAY: No, I did not. It was Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania.

Q: Let's talk about Yugoslavia from '72 to '74. What was going?What was doing then at that time?

CALLAWAY: There the effort was to move out into what are today the independent republics. While I was in Zagreb serving in the Croatian republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the time, we opened a U.S. cultural center in Ljubljana in Slovenia. It was kind of putting our mark into the various republics of Yugoslavia recognizing them to that extent, never thinking in terms of '92 in the Soviet Union or '92 in Yugoslavia, that we were going to be dealing with independent republics. We wanted to establish our presence there, to deal with Slovenia, to recognize Slovenia to that extent.

When I came back to Washington as the Yugoslav desk officer at USIA, we were working to open cultural centers, and did, in Sarajevo in Bosnia, and in Titograd (now Podgorica) in Montenegro. These were very small operations. They were not consular operations because the Yugoslavs were not having any of this. We actually had to negotiate these deals very carefully. The people who went there did not travel on diplomatic passports. They were not accredited to Yugoslavia as diplomats. They were information officers, or librarians, or cultural affairs officers and they went with official passports, which gave them a certain amount of protection.

This was an era when we were negotiating with the Yugoslavs to see how far we could push the envelope to be represented throughout the country of Yugoslavia. We did so successfully, although we wanted our people to be recognized as diplomats. We always wanted more and the Yugoslavs tended to want less, but we did it.

The opening in Ljubljana, which I attended, was a tremendous success. We had a lot of dignitaries show up, as well as a lot of artistic, academic, and intellectual people. I was back in the States at the time when we opened in Sarajevo, but we were very careful on who we would choose. We chose someone, Victor Jackovitch, who subsequently became our first ambassador into Bosnia. He was the first to open up the cultural center in Sarajevo. I can't remember who went to Titograd at this time.

Q: Despite you having to be rather precise in moderating what we were opening in Montenegro, Bosnia, and Slovenia, did you find that cultural wise and all, the Yugoslav government was pretty open to what we could do there?

CALLAWAY: Yes, especially with the hindsight gained after having gone and served in the Soviet Union. It was tremendously open. I don't think we realized how open it was at that time. But even having come to Yugoslavia and having served there, and then serving on the desk, looking back at Venezuela, which was my only previous Foreign Service assignment, we were limited in certain ways. There were student protests about Vietnam in Venezuela, but, as I mentioned to you, I managed to get the political counselor at the embassy to go onto campus and give a talk about Vietnam. That was pretty sensitive and there were a lot of doubts about that. I think Yugoslavia at the time, at least culturally and intellectually, was quite open. Politically, it was another matter. They simply were not going to recognize us putting diplomats into the various republics beyond where we had an established consulate (i.e., Zagreb).

Q: Did you find going on the desk, having served in Zagreb, were you getting a taste of the two outlooks between Zagreb consulate general in Croatia, and then sort of the Serbian outlook from our embassy and information office in Belgrade? Sitting back in Washington, did you get a feel for almost two different real perspectives of how they treated it, or did it reflect itself?

CALLAWAY: Certainly, but I think I had a feel for it when we were in Zagreb, along with the rest of those who were serving in the consulate there. We traveled to Belgrade a lot. It is not that we didn't get down frequently to Belgrade and consult with the embassy. We got down there much more than Belgrade came to us, but I suppose that is like Mohammed going to the mountain.

When I came back here, it was my first assignment in Washington. Working on the desk I was representing not only Yugoslavia but a couple of other countries as well. I worked extremely closely with the State Department; there were very close ties. There were very good people on the desk; Harry Gilmore and others at the time. I also worked with the Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency, and others, but mainly with the State Department. I began to see a bigger picture than I had in Zagreb. My perception now is that the differences were less than we perceived from Zagreb when we were thinking that they don't pay enough attention to us; we are a very important piece of the action here; Belgrade is ethnocentric and thinking only in terms of Serbian relations with the United States. I think a broader perspective developed as I came back to the desk. I began to see a bigger picture not only within Yugoslavia itself, but in how Yugoslavia fit into the overall relationships that we were having with the Soviet Union and with other countries in Eastern Europe.

Q: Were there any major developments that you can think of on youdesk issues or anything that came up in the '72 to '74 period?

CALLAWAY: There were no big issues. What we did was to try to negotiate, and successfully, a cultural agreement with Bulgaria, and Albania, both. The Voice of American was an issue with Bulgaria. We would periodically find ourselves jammed. This was not a huge issue, but it was a recurring one. If the Bulgarians got the sense that we had pushed the envelope too far, interviewed a Bulgarian dissident in the States, or talked about a particular incident in U.S.-Bulgarian relations that they felt went over the line in what they wanted to hear, they would start the jamming just as the Soviet Union was doing throughout the time. This happened maybe four times in the two year that I was on the desk, but then negotiations would get underway. "Why are you jamming?" "We are not jamming." "We have evidence that you are jamming. Here is the evidence." We would go back and forth like that. Those were some of the difficult issues that came up. Otherwise, we continued to work towards cultural agreements and expanding the kinds of relationships and exchanges that we had with the country.

Q: Then in '74 you took Russian training?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Was this a spur of the moment thing that you did or had you beeplanning to do this? How did it come about?

CALLAWAY: I think when I talked back in Venezuela about wanting to go and serve in the communist world, to know what it was all about, I had in mind Moscow. I think all of us did. It was kind of going to the mother church in a sense. We tremendously enjoyed Yugoslavia and I thought if this is what serving in a communist country is all about, bring on Moscow. No problems. Not while in Yugoslavia, but certainly while I was on the desk and talking to the powers that be, I started working on it. The press attachï¿½/information officer slot was coming open in Moscow and I thought that would be, and it turned out to be, a tremendously interesting situation. I went into language training at the Foreign Service Institute and nine months later went out to Moscow.

Q: How did you find the language training?

CALLAWAY: Difficult. I had known Serbo-Croatian. I certainly wouldn't consider myself fluent in Serbo-Croatian but I had worked well enough after two-and-a-half years in Zagreb, and I thought Russian would be a piece of cake, another Slavic language. Sure enough, I found that initially, I would say maybe the first three months, it was a piece of cake. It was quite easy. Then the differences started to come in.

Two things were supposed to happen that didn't happen. Actually, I was not supposed to go to Moscow until '76. At that time, as you may recall, they were sending many people to Garmisch to a Russian language institute. I was looking forward to going to Garmisch very much. Secondly, for that additional intensive language studies with Russian ï¿½migrï¿½s who were teaching there, it turned out that the person who was going to Moscow, for some reason couldn't go. My predecessor was extended in Moscow for one year and my departure date was moved up for one year, so I went off with less than half the Russian language training. At the end of my two years in Moscow I felt comfortable in Russian but I really felt that the Serbo-Croatian kept mixing me up.

Q: I took Russian early on and I remember ending up in Kyrgyzstan where I found myself absolutely tongue tied because I didn't know whether I was speaking Serbian or Russian.

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: Trying to sort out, and when you start doing that you are dead. You served in Moscow from when to when?

CALLAWAY: From '75 to '77.

Q: Your job was what?

CALLAWAY: It was press attachï¿½ and information officer.

Q: Whom did you replace?

CALLAWAY: Eli Flam. I don't know if you've talked with him or not.

Q: No.

CALLAWAY: He's an interesting fellow and he's in the area. He livedown in Port Tobacco which is not too far from here.

Q: I'd like to get a hold of him.

CALLAWAY: He's good. He came back and served on the VOA desk.

Q: When you arrived in Moscow, how would you describe the state orelations between the United States and Moscow at this time?

CALLAWAY: This was the great detente era in which Kissinger and Nixon, or at the time I guess it would have been Ford, were still trying to pull that out. They were under a great deal of criticism both from the right and the left; you're not going far enough; you're going too far; this will never work; this is a cynical game you are playing.

I was there for the last Kissinger trip to Moscow which was quite interesting. It was one of those flukes that happens, but the public affairs officer, the counselor for public affairs in the embassy, happened to be out of the country for medical reasons, if I recall correctly. Suddenly I was the acting public affairs officer dealing with the spokesman for the State Department, setting up press conferences, and negotiating with the Russians about how much access was allowed, how many journalists could come in to the room, and how long they could stay there. It was a tremendous experience but also kind of frightening to suddenly get thrust into that.

This was sort of the farewell visit of Kissinger. He was someone that the Soviets had, I think, grown, in a begrudging kind of way to, trust is too strong a word, but sort of know where he was coming from. I think it was a nostalgic visit for both Kissinger and his team, and for the Soviets who knew they were meeting with him for the last time.

I think it was very uncertain about what a Jimmy Carter regime, as they quickly found out, was going to mean as we moved into human rights. CSCE (today OSCE) had been signed in Helsinki during that period of time and although it was signed under Ford they knew that it was going to be implemented and carried out under Carter who talked an awful lot about human rights and meant what he said. It was an uneasy period.

I have another funny story. We were meeting late one night in the Kremlin with Kissinger and his team. It was just a very small group of people and there were maybe five at most U.S. journalists who were there. They were meeting in a small room and, as I say, it was very late at night. We had no idea how long this was going to go on and I had to relieve myself. One of the guards walked me down this hall and said, "Here's the men's room." I came out fully expecting to find the guard and there was nobody there. There was nobody in sight and I had no idea where I was. Here I am in the middle of the night wandering around the Kremlin. I couldn't believe it. I finally made my way back to the talks.

Q: What about when you got there, what did you do as press attachï¿½?What type of work were you doing?

CALLAWAY: The relationships were with both the resident foreign press and the local press. The foreign press was mainly U.S. There were about 25 foreign correspondents there at the time. The New York Times had a two person bureau. All the networks, CBS, NBC, ABC, were represented as were CNN, Washington Post, all the major media. To a lesser degree we worked with Reuters, Agence France Press, and others because we had more clout with the Foreign Ministry and that is who we really dealt with.

The foreign correspondents were accredited almost in the same ritual that the diplomats were accredited. There was very strict examination of their backgrounds. Their credentials were issued and they simply couldn't do any more travel, which was quite restricted in the Soviet Union, than we could without permission or without escorts. We represented in many ways the interests of the foreign press based in Moscow. We did it on a rather regular basis because they were always getting in trouble since, naturally, journalists were trying to push as far as they could.

I was there when Bob Toth of The L.A. Times was arrested and thrown into the KGB prison. It was scary as hell not only for him and his family but for all of us because this was going further than normal. They would scare them, harass them, smash their windshields, and puncture their tires, but rarely would they throw them into prison and keep them there. He had been caught in a setup, in a sting operation. All the journalists, of course, met with dissidents and they tried to do it as discretely as possible. This particular dissident with whom Toth established a relationship had been obviously coerced in one way or another by the KGB. He met Bob and was going to pass him some information when the KGB came and swooped down on both of them. There were some "allegedly" military papers in what he was passing over to him. He was accused of being a spy and thrown into prison.

After several days of pretty tough negotiations with them in which not only I, but right up to and including the ambassador were involved, we got him out of prison on the basis that I take him directly from prison and escort him straight out to the airport. TASS tried to interview him at the airport. They said, "It wasn't so bad, was it? Don't you want to confess that you really did it?" Toth kind of turned to me and said, "I don't say anything until I am out of here. Why don't you say something?" I said, "You accuse this guy falsely. You set him up." I sort of blasted them and put him on a plane.

The other thing we were supposed to do, as we did in so-called normal countries with which we had a normal relationship, was to establish relationships with the Soviet press, the Soviet media. I did that to the best extent possible. We would try to place U.S. programs on Soviet television. When we had people like Kissinger in town, we would set up interviews with him. With Pravda, with Izvestia, Komsomolskaya Pravda, with the other papers, we tried to have as close as what we considered normal kind of relations as we could with placement interviews, that sort of thing.

Another funny story. The foreign editor of Pravda was someone that I had established what I thought to be a bit more than the normal relationship. As I was leaving after two years there, I took my successor to call on him at Pravda. There had been a nasty piece in Pravda that day attacking us for something so I used the occasion to say that we thought that was pushing a little far, that it was nasty, inaccurate; why don't we try to work out things a little bit better with my successor here. I never knew how to take this, whether I felt I had really established a relationship and he was telling me something that he wouldn't have told everybody, or whether it meant that the relationship was strictly as formal and precise as the Soviets would want, but he turned to me and said, "Friend Callaway, do you see those file cabinets over there? The ones on the left are favorable stories about the United States and the ones on the right are unfavorable stories. I do what I am told." I thought it was an interesting revelation, but also it just shows you that there were always limits in how far we could carry the relationship.

Q: Were you ever picked on by the KGB or anything?

CALLAWAY: Not personally, although it happened to people that I was traveling with on a number of occasions. One of the great things about being press attachï¿½ is that when various people would come to town I would travel with them. A group of the ACYPL, American Council of Young Political Leaders, and a group of journalists came to the Soviet Union on an exchange program and we traveled out into Siberia on a couple of occasions. Apollo-Soyuz took place while we were there. That was a big event.

Q: That was a joint space...

CALLAWAY: A joint space adventure when the Apollo and the Soyuz, the two space capsules, for the first time went up and joined together. The Soviet cosmonauts traveled to the States and did a goodwill tour, and the astronauts came to the Soviet Union and we traveled around.

Another occasion that I remember in which we were both quite frightened, was when I escorted a VOA monitor through the Soviet Union to several cities. What he was doing was trying to see how the signal was being received, very innocently. He said exactly who he was and what he was doing. We were shadowed throughout the entire trip. A Soviet team of radio people would go into the hotel right next to us and as soon as he would set up his equipment and try to monitor it, they would start to jam it. We were followed on the streets. It wasn't direct harassment like what happened to Toth, for example, or another friend of mine who worked for U.S. News and World Reports who was given a mikky, in effect.

Q: You're talking about a mikky, in other words a pill...

CALLAWAY: Yes, something was put in his drink and then they accused him of being drunk and disturbing the peace, and they threw him in jail for a while. Our harassment was what happened to normal people. You would be stopped on the road and they would ask you where your papers where. They would hold you up knowing you had an appointment in the next town when you were traveling. It was that sort of thing.

Traveling with these groups, particularly going out to Siberia, was probably the most fascinating way to get away from what could become rather restricted and humdrum activities of dealing with the Soviets in the capital. People would find it odd that I said I really enjoyed traveling in Siberia, which I did on a couple of occasions. It reminded me of the attitude we see here when you go to Kansas or Nebraska or wherever, and ask them what they think of Washington. These people thought that they were on the frontier, they were building socialism out there, and those old fuddy duddy bureaucrats in Moscow had lost the vision long ago. We would have these really frank discussions between ourselves and young Communist Party leaders out in the provinces, in Ust-Ulimsk, which is way out on Lake Baikal where a big dam project was going on, and where a new railroad was being built. These experiences were when you got the feeling that there was not this monolithic attitude that the Soviets tried to project out of Moscow. It was refreshing and it was quite interesting.

With the astronaut travel, of course, they were trying to impress us. They took us to places where we had not been before, to the Soviet space program, and so on. The astronauts were not impressed. It was quite interesting to see them say, "My god, if we had seen what we see here on the ground we might never have linked up with them in space."

Q: That brings up something. You had served in Yugoslavia and all and now you are in the Soviet Union. Can you do a little compare and contrast with what you saw in the Soviet Union, both in Moscow and in your travels around, and compare it to what you had seen before and what you expected to see?

CALLAWAY: I think what I expected to see was based on our own experiences in Yugoslavia. Communism to me, before ever going to a communist state, tended to be sort of a monolithic perception. I went to Yugoslavia and this was not what I expected. This was quite a pleasant place to me. There were many objections that we had to the centralized control, to the control of the economy, and so on, but they were moving in the right direction.

I think I went to the Soviet Union after that experience having swung too far the other way and expected that this may not be exactly like Yugoslavia, but moving in that direction. I think the story I mentioned about the Pravda foreign affairs editor is an example of how the Soviets were very much in control. If things were getting better in the way they wanted, in terms of better trade or economic relations particularly with the United States, or respected borders which is the main thing that the Soviet Union wanted out of the CSCE agreements in Helsinki... We wanted more freedom of information. We were looking at what was at that time called basket three, that's the area we wanted. The Soviets wanted recognition of existing borders and by that they extended it not only to the existing states in Eastern Europe and sphere of influence, but also to the Baltic States which we had never recognized as being incorporated into the Soviet Union. As long as things were going their way I think that they would allow us to do more opening up for information and cultural programs; which we thought would eventually - and I think it eventually did in some ways - undermine the Soviet system.

The travel restrictions were very odious to me. You will recall we could travel around Yugoslavia quite freely. In Russia, you couldn't go to Zagorst outside of Moscow, which was a big monastery complex where the Russian Orthodox Church had their headquarters. It was a fascinating place to visit, but you had to get permission to travel outside the ring road of Moscow, which was about 25 miles. The Soviets were very clever; they would never say no. They just wouldn't say yes. It reminded me of later in Nicaragua under the Sandinistas where I applied for two solid years to travel to the Caribbean coast and they never said no, they just never said yes, so you weren't allowed to go.

You always knew that things were being monitored. I'm not sure, they probably were to a certain degree in Yugoslavia, your telephone conversations, your apartments were bugged, and so on. You knew that was the case in Moscow and you were not allowed to have any freedom about where you lived. We went from one building to another in the two years that we lived in Moscow. There were no Soviet citizens whatsoever living in those buildings; they were all foreigners. We had three young children at the time and one thing that we would do was go down to the playground after work or go and stand in a line to buy milk. With little children standing in line, you could have a conversation; otherwise, as I mentioned earlier, people would shy away from you for fear of their own jobs, or security. We would look for opportunities like this in order to have a normal conversation with a Russian citizen.

Q: How did your wife react to the Soviet Union?

CALLAWAY: She disliked it the most of any assignment. I had a job to go to, a place to go to every day, and exciting things like traveling out to Siberia and going with the astronauts. She taught in the university when we were in Venezuela when we didn't have children. In Zagreb, we only had one child and by now we had three. It was a rough life. Buying food, even though there were the Berioska shops, places where foreigners could buy food, still it was quite restricted in what you could buy and it took an awful lot of time. We had a part-time maid who, after we had come to know her a little bit, informed my wife that she didn't know what she had done wrong but we were far below her rank in the KGB and why she had been assigned to somebody so low-ranking, she just couldn't understand. That kind of thing after thinking she had established a relationship with this woman and suddenly being told that we were beneath her was too much.

Q: What about the Soviet Union as a country? I mean, where iranked in development and all that?

CALLAWAY: One of the attitudes that I had about the travel restrictions within the Soviet Union is that they weren't necessarily trying to hide always. In some cases, it was certainly the case like military establishments or concentration camps, which there certainly were. They were also trying to hide from foreigners the tremendous lack of development in that country. You got outside of the major cities - Leningrad, Moscow, Kiev - at the time, and from what little we could observe, it was a pretty primitive country. It really hadn't developed very much and that was one reason people wanted to move to Moscow. They were very restricted in moving to the big cities. Personal movement for Soviet citizens was more restricted than we were. They couldn't just pick up and say, "I want to get a job in the big city." Everybody wanted to come to the big city because life was better. If you got out to the countryside, it was quite primitive and I think the Soviets were trying to cover that up. It was a very backward country and you see that more and more now. With hindsight, we looked at their military establishment or their space program and thought, my god, these people are our rivals. Khrushchev was saying "We will bury you." No way, as we now see.

Q: During this time, as you were sitting there watching the campaign between Ford and Carter develop, was there disquiet in the embassy because of Carter trying to look for a different way to deal with the Soviets or at least it seemed like it, or not?

CALLAWAY: I can remember - and this was long before either of us were probably in the Foreign Service - when Stalin died and the United States was uneasy. What are we going to do? Are things going to get worse? At least we knew this devil. I think, to a degree, the Soviets sort of projected that same uncertainty. How are we going to deal with this guy (Carter)? We know what we are doing with the Nixons, Fords, and Kissingers of this world but this guy is a wild card. I think that regardless about how you may have felt about your own personal politics - and I would have tended to be more of a Democrat than a Republican - I think in terms of U.S.-Soviet relations, there was a bit of a concern, what's it going to mean? It turned out that things got tough because the Soviets reacted strongly to Carter pushing in the human rights area. And then there was Afghanistan, of course.

Q: What was the feeling about Brezhnev and the Soviet leadershithen? Was this a time when Brezhnev was beginning to fail?

CALLAWAY: Yes. It is reminiscent in some ways of the way we arlooking at Yeltsin today; is he going to make it through another day?

Q: I have to say that it seems like for the last 20 years we've been looking at the health of Soviet leaders and a good part of the time they seem to be on their last legs and not really terribly responsive.

CALLAWAY: Right. Andropov was more ill than I think we realized hwas. It's scary isn't it?

Q: It is scary. Who was our ambassador while you were there?

CALLAWAY: There were two and they were very different in personalities and attitudes towards the Soviets. Walter Stoessel, who is now deceased, was the ambassador when I went there. Stoessel was a very gentle man. That is the best way to describe his personality and that's the way he dealt with the Soviets. It was very low key. He tried to be as rational as he could. Of course, he stood up on issues of principal, but it was a very cooperative attitude. He was replaced by Mac Toon, who had served in Yugoslavia and who had a very different attitude towards the Soviets. He was a tough guy. "I'm going to tell them the way it is."Every week, unless there was something going on, the ambassador would give a background briefing to the American press corps, plus Reuters who were considered as honorary Americans for this occasion. Agence France Press and Deutsche Welle and others were very irate about this because everybody knew that it went on. He would give a background briefing for the press right in the embassy, for the American media representatives. Stoessel and Matlock, who was the DCM at the time, would give rather factual information, and I would say they tried to accentuate the positive. Toon came in and his first briefing he said, "It is going to be a different ball game here guys." We were talking about negotiating either SALT or some treaty with the Soviets, and one of the correspondents asked him, "Doesn't it have to come at a certain point to a matter of trust?" He slammed his fist on the table and said, "Trust? Hell I don't trust the British!" He sort of put his stamp on it. They were very different personalities and had different ways of viewing things.

Q: Did you get sort of between these two ambassadors and the presat all?

CALLAWAY: The two ambassadors were very capable. They both came with a lot more expertise and experience in the Soviet Union than I had. I was the press spokesman for the embassy so normally I would issue the statements in the name of the ambassador and in the name of the embassy, or do an interview, unless it became something where they had to have the ambassador on the issue.

There was one issue that I felt extremely uncomfortable with to the point where I suppose I tended to jeopardize my career. I felt so uncomfortable with it that I went to the public affairs counselor, my immediate boss, and said, "I just don't feel comfortable in being the spokesman on this issue." The issue was the very sensitive one of radiation of the embassy. We had it pretty well documented that the Soviets were microwaving the embassy and the reason was uncertain. Were they trying to pick up signals from our communications facilities? Were they actively trying to irradiate us? The controls within the embassy about who could talk about it and what they could say about it were very, very rigid.

Q: You were saying Matlock was very tough.

CALLAWAY: He was very tough and this was the word, "If you can't handle it as a Foreign Service officer then maybe you are not serving in the right place, at the right time." I went to talk to the Ambassador Stoessel. Stoessel was much more gentle in his explanation. "This is a highly sensitive subject. It is being worked at the highest levels. This is the word we have from Kissinger. This is what we have to do, Gil." It was much more comforting to me to hear that explanation than this sort of, tough it out, but I still was very uncomfortable with what we were saying. I didn't think we were giving the whole story. I felt that possibly people's lives and health were in jeopardy, and I though we ought to be more forthcoming. I went to the public affairs officer and said, "I can't do this any more." He was very good. This was Ray Benson.

Q: I know Ray. He and I were in Belgrade together.

CALLAWAY: Right. It was Ray and Ray said, "Okay, I'll take it ufor you," on this particular issue.

Q: This is a matter of trust which has come up from time to time and that is there is a feeling by people who served in Moscow that for geo-political reasons Henry Kissinger was quite willing to sell his team down the river as far as dangers. I mean things were happening like this radiation and it may be a very sensitive issue, but it really wasn't very sensitive. It was a very straightforward issue: what the hell are you doing? Maybe it had something to do with electronic eavesdropping on both sides or something but the fact was that it is still not quite clear what this was all about.

CALLAWAY: No, I don't think it is clear to this day.

Q: I would have thought that there would have been a great deal oessentially unease.

CALLAWAY: There was a great deal of unease.

Q: I mean our leaders, and not just the embassy, but Kissinger and his company; is he supporting his staff? If there is a doubt you have to err on the side of health but that didn't seem to fit within his purview.

CALLAWAY: Subsequently, and they had Johns Hopkins Medical School da study...

Q: Yes, I know. I mean all of us who served in Yugoslavia haquestionnaires too, but still.

CALLAWAY: What happened was that the Hopkins study said that they had interviewed everybody who had served in Moscow between certain periods of time. I was interviewed. You were probably interviewed. I knew people who weren't though. Therefore, I knew that either Hopkins believed they had interviewed everybody or they had been told to skew the results. It may have been a minor thing, but it could have been the surface of the iceberg. Knowing that sort of thing leads you to question other things when other things may not have been in question. Knowing that we were making misleading statements with the imprimatur of Johns Hopkins Medical School.

Q: And to our own people.

CALLAWAY: And to our own people.

Q: It's a very serious question about the leadership anparticularly you go right up to Henry Kissinger.

CALLAWAY: Yes. It was an uneasy time. Families were briefed and they would call them in periodically because, of course, you are concerned about your wives, your children. I can recall my wife, being the wife of the press attachï¿½, said, "I just think that this is unconscionable that we can't get this word out." She talked to the wife of another embassy official who said, "By damn, I don't care if this ruins my husband's career and we get shipped out of here tomorrow. I understand why you're not doing it because your husband's the press attachï¿½ and he's the first one they would point their finger at, but I am going to the Washington Post and the New York Times and telling them everything they told me," although they had been sworn to say nothing. She said, "To hell with them. I'm going to go tell it all." So the word did get out. It was a disturbing time.

Q: There must have been a lot of talk. Did you ever figure out whawas behind this?

CALLAWAY: Not to my knowledge, the various stories, as you say, the questions of why they were doing it and who was doing what to whom? It was being done. I don't think there is any question about that. I think the whole question of the health issue is debatable to this day.

Q: Did Henry Kissinger make several trips while you were there?

CALLAWAY: No. He made his last trip when I was there. I was tolit was a piece of cake compared to some of the earlier ones.

Q: Did you have any presidential visit while you were there?

CALLAWAY: Not in the Soviet Union, we did not. We had the first Cyrus Vance visit which was absolutely fascinating.

Q: Could you talk about that because this was a very important one. This would have been in early '77. He came as one of his first things.

CALLAWAY: Yes, it was pretty early.

Q: Could you talk about that?

CALLAWAY: They came and the Carter administration was determined to move ahead on the arms limitation talks. I think that they were going to show that they were going to be able to push this. They were in now and they were for peace, cooperation, and so on. This new team came in headed by Vance with representatives from the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was a fairly large team.

My recollection is that the ambassador pointed out to the team that there were certain aspects of the proposed agreement that were going to be very, very difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to get accepted by the Soviets. The attitude of the team - and I'm not going to speak for the whole team - that was conveyed to me was that they had been through absolute hell on negotiating this before they ever left Washington between the CIA, Department of Defense, the Energy agency, the NSC, and various factions. They had been through so much, negotiated so much among themselves, and arrived at this, that they couldn't imagine that the Soviets wouldn't accept it.

Toon was absolutely right. The Soviets didn't accept it. They rejected certain sections of it totally out of hand. In the parlance of the deal, as we deal in diplomacy, there was no fallback position so we kind of gathered up in some befuddlement our papers and the team went home. It was a setback rather than an advance.

Q: Essentially Vance came back very obviously with egg on his face. CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Did you find the press that came with him and the corps that was there, was this apparent at the time that this wasn't going anywhere. During the time were you trying to put the best face on it and all of that?

CALLAWAY: One of the things that made a great deal of difficulty for me in my relationships with the resident American correspondents there was that Kissinger and Sonnenfeldt very carefully controlled access. They did a couple of press briefings while they were there, but they also did background briefings and they restricted those background briefings to the traveling five, eight, 10 journalists. I don't remember exactly what the numbers were. This became known, particularly when you had some major organizations who for one reason or another were not represented in the traveling press. You are seeing reports back home reflecting things that were not in the public briefings. People knew what was going on; it was not that much of a secret. I tried my damnedest to convince Sonnenfeldt and Kissinger that they had to include at least a representative sampling, particularly from those major organizations that weren't represented, but I was not successful.

Q: But you were talking about Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt?

CALLAWAY: Yes. I'm sorry, we were talking about the Vance visit. Yes, we're talking about when Vance came the first time Hodding Carter was spokesman. They were much more open. Forgive me for slipping between the two.

Q: But anyway that reflected the Kissinger time.

CALLAWAY: It was much more open and that was also part of the Carter administration's policy; they were not going to have this kind of restriction. At the time, I was thinking it was sort of a reaction to CSCE and how we were going to handle the Helsinki accords. My recollection from 20-plus years ago was that Carter was pretty open. They came here, thought they had a good deal, thought they offered the Soviets a good deal, but they didn't accept it. Obviously, they were trying to put the best face on it, even to the extent of saying we negotiated this very heavily in Washington and tried to represent the various interests, and we thought that we were offering the Soviets a good deal. There were a lot of tough questions like, don't you have a fallback position?

It was a very different atmosphere. We even got, in a couple of instances, access for more non-U.S. representatives of the press corps. Agence France Press and others were invited in. I think they were being very open while trying to put the best face on their disappointment and their chagrin at not being about to pull something off.

Q: Just as sort of a footnote to the oral histories here, I think this is something I've noticed again and again, and that is that the Washington operators, again including Foreign Service types and all, tend to feel that if they've got Congress on their side, Treasury on their side, they've got a pretty good hook with the media and the public and all. If they negotiate it, then obviously these stupid foreigners have to agree with what we've come up with because we've done this. They seem to lose sight of the fact that negotiations on our side, and the Pentagon of course, is just one part of the equation and you had better start talking to your experts. I think the hot shot operators in Washington sort of brush aside the other country's experts because they are sort of nay sayers.

CALLAWAY: Yes. I think we see it now with Kosovo. There was almost a mind set in terms of Milosevic being the devil who is driving this thing, but he is a big bully and will cave if we punch him in the nose, and not looking at the other things that could happen. I am certainly paraphrasing this, it is not an exact quote, but I remember one member of the team said, "We've been through hell in Washington. The Soviets will be a piece of cake."

Q: Well then you left in '77, whither?

CALLAWAY: I had applied to study in Germany, East-West relations, and a couple of other places. I ended up going to Johns Hopkins Bologna Center in Italy. I did a year of studies at the advanced level there at the Center of European Studies of Johns Hopkins SAIS in Bologna.

Q: From '77 to '78?

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: What were you looking at?

CALLAWAY: I did a study of the relationships between the United States and the Communist Party of Italy, as a reflection of U.S.-Soviet relationships. I drew the parallels and decided that there wasn't very much the PCI, the Communist Party of Italy, could do compared to how our relationships with the Soviet Union were going. We were either more lenient, or favorable, or accommodating towards our dealings with the Communist Party of Italy and thinking they were more Eurocommunist (Eurocommunist was the term of the day at that time) or less Stalinist, and more socialistic, depending on how our relations with the Soviet Union were going. I did some timelines and some relationships about what was happening with U.S.-Soviet relations at the time.

We were tougher on the PCI if relations were bad and if relationships were better then we were more lenient. That was sort of saying that we dealt in terms of our big power relationships, not only with the East European countries, but also with large communist parties in France and Italy. The Communist Party of Italy was a huge and influential organization which is now splintered in many ways. Bologna had been a communist-controlled city since right after the war. It was right in the middle of the red belt. I got to talk to the mayor and other people.

Q: Did you talk to Berlinguer or not?

CALLAWAY: I never got to talk to Berlinguer. I saw him at rallies.

Q: Just yesterday I was interviewing Allan Holmes who was our DCM during this time that you are talking about in Rome and he was talking about how we were very concerned about Euro-communism, but it was not our policy to feel that this was a benign influence and we should be very concerned about it.

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: Although the Italian communist party was not the Stalinist one of the French, still we didn't want to have this historic compromise. Did you find that dealing with our officials there, that you could see a very firm line drawn?

CALLAWAY: My feeling is that our embassy and its officials were much more open to this than Washington and tried to say, we can go further, not all the way, not too far, but we can go further than the guidelines that were coming out of Washington were permitting us to do. I may be inaccurate in my assumptions, but that was the feeling I had. There was more of an effort if you are on the ground to deal with these people - we are here; we know them better; we know where to draw the line - than the people back in Washington who are setting a more general global policy.

Q: Bologna fell under our consulate general in Florence?

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: Was Bob Gordon there?

CALLAWAY: I know Bob. I guess that is who was there, yes. He was partially vision impaired consul general. He was a fascinating fellow.

Q: According to Allan Holmes he was someone who really looked at this with a much more balanced view. His analyses were really taken very seriously.

CALLAWAY: I think so.

Q: Can you talk a little about the Bologna Center, the site? Whwere the students there? What was the atmosphere?

CALLAWAY: It was a tremendous atmosphere. There were only about 100 or so students, as I recall. They were all graduate students. They were all enrolled in the School of Advanced International Studies, SAIS. About half of them were Americans and about half of them were from everywhere else. They were mostly European, of course, Germans and French. Some were from the East. There were some Yugoslav students and professors there. There was one East German professor who taught a course on Marxism which was absolutely fascinating to hear from that perspective. Then there were some from the Far East. It was a real mixed bag of people who were very interested in public policy, who were going to go into either their governments or their foreign services, or international aspects of businesses in their various countries.

It was a tremendous experience. Dealing with the students and professors there was as exciting as the academic part of the courses although with the kind of study that I was doing, and most of the other students were doing, it was not very book oriented. It was very practical. You are in Bologna. Take advantage of it. You can travel to Milan, Florence, Geneva, very easily. Of course, it was a wonderful part of the world to live in and eat in for a while so a lot of us did a lot of weekend traveling. The University of Bologna was very heavily influenced by leftists at the time, and SAIS had a close relationship. Many of the professors came over. As a matter of fact, I had Romano Prodi, the recently departed prime minister of Italy and now the head ofthe European Commission, as a professor of economics from the University of Bologna.

It was quite an interesting time. The fall before I arrived there, there had been student riots in Italy, in Bologna, similar to the '68 days. The atmosphere as the school year opened was very uneasy and tense in the city. There were some demonstrations in which I went out as a student and sort of mingled with the students. I talked to the students and asked, "Why are you here? What do you think about this?" Having the mantle of a student coming over from Johns Hopkins, it was very easy to do and gave me a lot of real insights. It was sort of like being in a consulate for a year, like in Zagreb, and you could see the relationships and how Bologna and Emilia-Romagna, the regional province there, viewed Italy, which is a very varied country, as you know.

They were in the northern and industrialized part. You get into the Florence area and it is a very central region. Rome is seen as a bunch of government bureaucrats, worthless. And then there is the south. The north, or certainly Bologna and Milan, views them as a bunch of freeloaders; "we are supporting this country." It was a very good lead-in to my subsequent assignment in the embassy in Rome because I had not only a provincial, but a non-diplomatic status. I had no diplomatic status in Bologna.

It was absolutely fascinating getting into the bureaucracy of the country. I think bureaucracy has to be an Italian word; they invented it. We had to go out and find a place to live, register a car, get a driver's license, all of that, the way Italians do it. Most of us when you go into a country never realize what the embassy is doing for you. It was a relief in some ways to go down to the embassy and say, "Get my drivers license." We knew what it was like to deal with the Italian bureaucracy, to deal with Italian politicians, to live in the red belt of the country.

Q: What was your impression, having come from the Soviet Union and being in Yugoslavia and all, of Italian communism at that time before you got to Rome?

CALLAWAY: I think that the thrust of my paper is that we were kind of short sighted to let our relationships with a very important Western European communist party be determined by our relationships with the Soviet Union. My thesis was, this is what determines our relationships with the PCI and I think it was a critical assessment, that we shouldn't do it. We should look more at what the PCI is, listen more to what they are saying, and try at least on a country to country basis, maybe not in an overall scheme, to deal with that situation and deal with it as part of our relationships between the United States and Italy, rather than between the United States and the Soviet Union. The criteria that was flowing out to us from Washington was "Denounce this, denounce that." Berlinguer was very careful in how far he would go in "breaking" with the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you feel at that time that maybe the Communist Party was one that people were converted to or did they almost inherit it with their family or with their job?

CALLAWAY: We weren't that far away from the Second World War. We forget what Italy went through in the Second World War. We tend to think of Italy as a wonderful place to visit, with good food, and so on. We also tend to think of them as allies, which they are, with NATO and the G-7. They are very strong allies. We remember Mussolini vaguely, certainly not in the same way as Adolph Hitler and the Nazis, and the Fascists in Italy. Italy is not as central to our relationships today as Germany is, certainly not since the combined Germany of East and West Germany. Therefore, I think the history of Italy, even the recent history of Italy, slips away from us.

The communists in Italy were an integral part of a partisan movement first against the Fascist regime but then more importantly after Italy declared armistice in '43. Italy was essentially divided between a German occupied north and an Allied occupied south. The partisans were a variety of groups, monarchists and others, but the Communist Party played a tremendous role and had a good shot at forming the government with Togliatti after the end of the war in Europe in '45. I think a lot of people consider them to be almost the saviors of Italy. They saw themselves in partisan terms. The incremental leanings that Italy made towards Marxism, and then there was a very important referendum about Italy going back to a monarchy again...

Q: In 1948 and we poured lots of money...

CALLAWAY: Put lots of money into that election, yes, we did. We forget, but the United States and Great Britain split right down the middle over this issue. The British wanted a monarchy back again. They had a monarchy. This was the empire. "We will try to restore the world much like it was." Roosevelt and later Truman were very much opposed to this policy. There were breaks within the alliance. The Cold War was heating up. Turkey and Greece were a more immediate concern to us but certainly the Communist Party of Italy we saw as a subversive fifth column going to undermine right up to the British Isles again by another totalitarian regime. I think that the Communist Party of Italy had moved considerably since then.

Q: Fleurs, I think, which was very Stalinist. It jumped to thKremlin's will, at least the leadership. In '78 you did what then?

CALLAWAY: In '78 they asked me what I wanted to do and I said, "How about another year in Bologna?" When they stopped laughing, I went to Rome in the same position that I had in Moscow. I was press attachï¿½/information officer in Rome.

Q: You did this in Rome from when to when? CALLAWAY: From '78 to '82, four years.

Q: In Rome, could you talk about your ambassador, relations with thpress and also the embassy at that time?

CALLAWAY: I had come from being press attachï¿½/information officer and you think you know what you are doing, but it was a totally different situation. Of course in Italy, here is one of our firmest allies. When I went the ambassador was a Carter appointee by the name of Richard Gardner who just a year or so ago ended up being Clinton's ambassador in Spain. I served with him in both countries. He was replaced by Maxwell Rabb who was a Reagan appointee. Those were the two political appointees. I had never dealt with a political appointee as an ambassador before, so that was different. Even though there had been political appointees in Moscow and Venezuela as well, I hit career ambassadors up until that point in my career.

The first thing I noticed was the difference in relationships with the resident American media in Rome. There were probably just as many accredited full-time correspondents, 25 or so, but there were many more stringers and freelancers. Italy was a great place to live. The attitude was, "I work for this magazine and I shovel shit at night; anything to live here in Rome, I will do it." The other difference was their attitude towards the embassy. At the embassy in Moscow, we were the defender, the provider of information, very close personal friends. In Rome, it was basically, "We don't need you; information is wide open; we can go to anybody; we can interview anybody any time we want to." It was a very different relationship. It was not hostile, but just "we live in our own worlds, we have our job to do, and we can do it."

Certainly during a presidential visit, of which there are always a multitude in a place like Italy, then you do credentials and access, when the press conference is going to be set up, who is going to get into the background briefings. That is when you become very important to them. I certainly formed some person friendships which have lasted as long out of Rome as they did out of Moscow, but on a day to day basis, we were dealing in a more cooperative relationship with the Italian media.

This was a time when television in Italy was going from a state-run entity of three television stations, RAI one, two, and three. They were controlled by RAI, which is Radio Italia when it was only radio, before it became television. Television by that time was very big. Television reflected, as did the state-run radio, the political situation in Italy. RAI-1 was Christian Democrat, RAI-2 was Socialist, and RAI-3 was Communist. It wasn't identified but everybody just understood that those parties had access not only to the kinds of programming in those three radio and television stations, but more importantly to the jobs. They named the director. A party faithful was head of the news division, and so on.

We obviously dealt with those three stations very differently. RAI-1, which for many years had been the only radio and television station, was the biggest, the most influential, and the most watched, so we dealt with them the most. Also, quite obviously, they were the easiest to deal with. They were the Christian Democrats, and there was a long relationship between the U.S. government and the Christian Democratic Party. We tried to deal with all of them, including RAI-3, to the extent that we could, placing programs, getting interviews, having as much access to the Italian media as we could. In the Soviet Union it was a totally different ball game.

Sometime between '78 and '82, congress [Italian parliament] passed a law banning the state monopoly on the electronic media, radio and TV. Television stations, literally mom and pop operations, were springing up all over Italy. There were something like 900 television stations, some of them with a broadcasting radius of three inches. There was a whole other outlet for interviews. We tried very hard to figure out which stations are going to survive, which are going to coalesce into private networks of their own.Berlusconi, a recent prime minister before Prodi in Italy, made a fortune setting up a series of private and radio networks based out of Milan. He also used them in his electoral campaigns to the frustration and irritation of some of the older political types who were used to dealing with the established media.

The newspapers also reflected party affiliation. L'Unita was the Communist Party newspaper; there was no question about that. They were the Pravda and said so on their front page. The other newspapers, like Corriera della Sera, tended to be more favorable towards the Christian Democrats. They were independent papers but still had very definitive political affiliations and leanings that you didn't expect in the States, but that you certainly knew was the case in Moscow. It was a "democratic" society where your media were pretty well identified by political affiliations.

As you tried to arrange for an interview with La Republica, you knew you were going to speak to the socialist and more leftist political elements of the population. There was that consideration as we tried to get newspapers to place our stories. This was the time when we were trying to place intermediate range missiles in Europe.

Q: The Pershing twos and the cruise missiles.

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: This was in response to the SS-20s which the Soviets had ringeEurope with.

CALLAWAY: Right. This was a very touchy issue. Who was going to be first to allow us to place these? The British had, of course, said yes, but the British were not as close (to Russia) as we wanted to be. It was not going to be the French because they were not part of the military alliance of NATO. The Italians kept telling us, "Okay, the British are on board. You get one other then we will do it."There were heavy efforts to place the U.S. point of view in the media on why we had to respond to the SS-20s; why Italy was so crucial in a geographic sense (We call it our land bound aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean.); and why we wanted them to do this. One of the most successful and satisfying media junkets, if you will, was taking an RAI-1 team, the major television, for something like two weeks on a tour around Europe. We went to look at the Iron Curtain. We flew over the Soviet anchorage off the shores of Libya in the Bay of Hammamet. We went to some of the air bases and saw the underground bunkers of NATO. We landed on an aircraft carrier. It was absolutely fantastic with this RAI team.

They made a television series, produced by RAI, and we think it had a tremendous amount to do with finally persuading the Italian parliament to vote in favor of placing the cruise missiles. Ten years later when I was back in Italy with another hat on, we were pulling the cruise missiles out of Italy and trying to persuade the Italians that we really didn't need them any more. They were looking at it by that time mainly from an economic point of view; "We are losing jobs; you've built up this infrastructure; please put something else there if you are not going to have this."

Q: Let's talk about your two ambassadors and how you found theworking with the media, first Gardner.

CALLAWAY: Gardner was a professor of international law from Columbia University who had been a very active political advisor. He, Brzezinski and Vance had been among the top foreign policy advisors to Carter. He had very close relationships not only with the White House, but with the State Department and with the National Security Council. He was very well plugged in politically back in Washington, which is always a legitimate argument for a political appointee.

Gardner's other plus was that he knew Italy. He was married to an Italian lady whose family from Jewish background had escaped in 1939 from Venice. He had been a professor who had come and lectured on international law and economics in Italy as a Fulbright professor, or under one guise or another, for practically every year for the last 20 years. He knew Italy. He knew a lot of people. He spoke Italian.

He was immediately determined to make himself and the Carter administration's policy towards Italy well known throughout the country. He was active with the media and in public speaking to the point of exhaustion. He ate up speech writers and other people. He had a full-time speech writer/press attachï¿½ who was in USIS. I sort of ran the part that we've been talking about, the dealings with the media and working with the correspondents, and so on. Another person practically served Richard Gardner full-time writing speeches and setting up speaking engagements for him.

That changed when Rabb came in. He knew Italy less. He didn't speak Italian very well. He was a very accessible man but in a different way. Gardner was out giving speeches all the time traveling around the country. He was a difficult personality to deal with. He was very demanding, an "I don't suffer fools gladly," kind of a personality. But those who worked with him in trying to reach out to a lot of Italians, my hat is off to them. He really got out there and he did it.

Gardner was absolutely convinced in 1980 that Jimmy Carter was going to be president again. We set up one of these election night events in which you put up the boards and report, have tickers going, and everything. We tried to set it up like one of the television press centers. The ambassador insisted that we have it at the residence and we tried to talk him out of this. We had it at the residence and it was a very dismal crowd. They went out of there rather early in the evening, as you will recall.

Q: How about dealing with terrorism during this time? You had the Red Brigade doing its thing and Moro had been assassinated though probably not on your time.

CALLAWAY: It happened when I was in Bologna.

Q: Then General Dozier was kidnapped. Did this involve what yowere doing at all?

CALLAWAY: We talked about the access of the media in Moscow on sensitive issues. In Italy, Dozier was a comparable issue. Here was a high-ranking American general being held by people who had shown with Moro that they would kill him. There was a great deal of sensitivity and concern not only about negotiating with the Red Brigades, not giving them the propaganda advantage that they were looking for by this kidnaping, but to save the man's life. There was a great deal of activity going on which I simply was not aware of. They were protecting the embassy spokesman and the press attachï¿½. I could go and say, "There is a lot going on that I don't know about fellows." Of course the media had to write their stories, but they were pretty damn understanding of not trying to find and locate Dozier which could have placed his life in danger. "Okay, they know where we are, so we've got to kill him and get out of here."

I worked very closely with the political counselor at the time, Bob Frowick, who was later in Bosnia trying to settle things there. He was the embassy point man on this. There were teams from various U.S. government agencies in-country trying to achieve what they eventually ended up achieving. They got Dozier out alive, unlike Moro.

As you read Italian history today even, I am often reminded of Oliver Stone's movie about JFK and how that conspiracy won't go away. There are people who absolutely believe that because Aldo Moro was in favor of "compromiso historico" - in other words, a better relationship with the Communist Party - the United States was somehow implicated in his death. There are people who believe that Henry Kissinger said, "Kill him. We don't want him coming out of here." Also, as you will recall, Moro did a lot of talking about his colleagues in the government with the Brigade Rossi when they had him in captivity and there was a feeling that he was going to come out even more influential within the political establishment.

Dozier, to the best of our knowledge, did not give state secrets away. He was not an Italian politician. He was a high ranking NATO commander. Of course, the Brigade Rossi were thinking, "This man knows where all the nuclear weapons are and maybe we can steal a nuclear weapon." There was a tremendous amount of sensitivity and I felt both the Italian and foreign media were quite understanding that this is a very dicey situation and let's try to do as much reporting on it as we can, but let's not run rampant. [Let's do what the] Freedom of Information or Privacy Act dictate.

Q: What was the feeling when Maxwell Rabb came on board, because he was so different than Richard Gardner? He had initially been offered Switzerland and he said that's not a big enough country, so he was given Italy instead. He wasn't there as an Italian hand but it was more as kind of a reward. What was sort of his initial introduction to the embassy and how did that work out, particularly from your perspective?

CALLAWAY: I think there may have been, depending on your own political feelings, either great joy or great dismay about Ronald Reagan becoming president. Not only a Republican but a very conservative Republican. I think there was concern about how Maxwell Rabb was going to reflect that in our relationships with Italy.

What Rabb did was come in and say, "I'm no expert in this country and I will depend very much on my staff." That is a good way to start off with any staff; that makes you popular. He said, "I don't know as much as my predecessor. I have tremendous relationships with Ronald Reagan and with his people at the National Security Council and other places." He had the access, but he didn't know the country as well and he turned to his team and said, "Educate me. Help me be a good representative." I think that won Rabb a lot of admiration and a lot of respect. I think his team at times had more influence than they did under Richard Gardner who said, "I know this country as well as you do and I can make up my own mind about some things."

So after Gardner I was with Maxwell Rabb for just a year. The main way it changed my relationship with the ambassador's office is that Gardner had almost a full-time person working with him. Ambassador Rabb said, "I don't need that. I don't speak Italian. I am not going to be going out doing as many public personal appearances as my predecessor. I am going to depend more on my staff." I suddenly became a full-time press attachï¿½/ambassadorial spokesman.

Rabb depended more on his staff, including his press attachï¿½, to issue reports, and so on, in his name. He was much less media-oriented than Gardner had been. Gardner liked to do the interviews himself, talk to the newspaper reporters, and go on television himself. So there was more work in that sense, which was more satisfying in some way, and less in some ways in having an ambassador who was not as much of an expert, in other words, you got to do more. I think Rabb had a pretty good track record in Italy and in running an embassy in that way, probably up until the kidnaping of the terrorists out of Egypt of the Achille Lauro ship.

Q: Were you there at the time?

CALLAWAY: I was not. I was not even in Italian affairs at the time, so I only know what I read. Here was a real crisis in Italian-U.S. relations and we wanted those people, but the main terrorist was released, as you will recall. There was a bit of a black mark on that.

Q: You were there, I guess, when there was that supposedly righwing explosion in, was it Milan?

CALLAWAY: In Bologna at the railroad station. A lot of people blamed the Brigade Rossi. One of the lines of the Brigade Rossi is, "Yes, we do carry out terrorist acts in order to call attention to the justness of our cause, but we don't do half of them; half of them are done by the right wing trying to make us look bad." It took the government a long time to go and look at the explosives, to interview people, to look at the way access was made to the stations, and so on. This was a case where in subsequent investigations, it does begin to look as though it was a right wing effort to paint the Brigade Rossi in a bad light by doing it in Bologna, which was the buckle of the red belt, right there in the train station, with a lot of innocent people killed. There we were trying to help out with the basic investigation of figuring out who was responsible for this thing. There was no direct involvement of U.S. strategic or human concerns as there was in the case of General Dozier's kidnaping.

Q: Did you get involved much with the media over the presence of American troops? We had some rather large bases such as in Naples, and then Ciganella and Aviano. We also had three man listening posts, the whole thing. Did they cause a relations problem?

CALLAWAY: Surely, in both directions. There was a problem coming in with a new base to place the cruise missiles, and then there was a problem removing that base because of the economic aspects. The Italian government was not always a Christian Democratic government. Spadolini was the prime minister. He was a Republican, not like our Republican Party, but a small party. It was a coalition compromise between the Christian Democrats, the communists, and the socialists, in order to put him there. Basically the entire time I was there, the government tended to be favorable to our bases because they were a loyal, faithful ally of the United States and it gave economic advantage to Italy. They tended to try to put them in the south whereas we wanted them in the north because of the proximity (to Russia). They wanted them in the south because of economic reasons.

They realized that demonstrations could spring up, there could be local resistance to various things, particularly things like we've seen recently in Aviano with this terrible ski gondola incident there. Or the common thing that happens throughout the world with sailors on leave, with the raping of a young girl, or a fight that breaks out in a bar.

The military always has public affairs officers assigned to commands. We tried to meet frequently outside of crises situations, when we were trying to work out what the embassy was going to say, and what the military command was going to say in response to an incident. We would gather together all the public affairs officers at least four times a year and work on what to do to improve relationships and perceptions of the base within a particular community on a regular basis: things like sports activities, humanitarian efforts, working with the local orphanages, inviting people not just when a ship visit comes in, when you always organize a visit, but bringing people onto the base. Show them that the bunkers are not glowing green and that there are not people stored away who are ready to run out and take control of Italy if the PCI wins the next election, that sort of stuff. We tried to establish as close a working relationship as we could with the military commands because it was a constant concern.

There was a civilian plane that was downed when I was there. I think it was flying between Naples and Sicily. It just fell out of the sky, sort of like the Trans World Airline. To this day, it is gospel among the conspiratorial cliques within the country that it was a NATO missile that brought this airplane down. Nothing was ever proved. It was like TWA, what happened? Our intelligence is a little better these days and we think the TWA wasn't a missile, but we don't really know what caused that plane to blow up. This one was the same way. But those kinds of mythologies persist. Ustica was a little island north of Sicily where it fell into the sea and you say that word today, Ustica, and they know exactly what you are talking about, that plane that NATO shot down.

Q: It sounds like this was a pretty active time for you. How about presidential visits? Ronald Reagan obviously must have come there, and you probably also had Carter visit.

CALLAWAY: Yes, we had both.

Q: How did they go?

CALLAWAY: A presidential visit, particularly to an ally like Italy which is a close ally, is always a big deal. I think any country, friend or foe, appreciates the U.S. president visiting. You are the biggest, most powerful, and we weren't the only "superpower" in the world at the time, but we were certainly their superpower. It is paying respect to your country so you always wanted the visit. And the ambassador, especially if he is a political type, he wants his good friend Ronald Reagan or his good friend Jimmy Carter to come and stay in the residence, and spend as much time as he possibly can. There is always pressure both from the host country and from your own embassy about getting as many presidential visits as you possibly can.

Q: One presidential visit is equivalent to two earthquakes.

CALLAWAY: Yes, and we had earthquakes, too. The things you tend to note are in spite of your own political inclinations. I happen to lean more toward the Democratic Party and so I tended to think that democratic administrations would have a more "enlightened" policy towards these countries. In spite of that, we had a hell of a time dealing with some of the press and media staff of Jimmy Carter's White House. When Ronald Reagan's crew came to town, it reflected Maxwell Rabb's feeling of "I depend more on my staff; you guys tell me what to do; you want to set up a press conference, we will see what we can do." It was not that totally, of course. The White House always is looking for one thing first. Mike Deaver wants to make Ronald Reagan look the best he can, Jody Powell wants to make Jimmy Carter look the best he can. That is their primary aim.

In presidential visits, they focus on how it is going to play back home. Therefore, they are looking more at the domestic media. No matter whether it was Republican or Democratic, conservative or liberal, we had trouble convincing them that the United States has a stake in having local media access to the President, too. Many times, one of the arguments I would use is, "Look, the New York Times and the Washington Post read Corriere della Sera and La Republica, and they are going to pick up from their stories; therefore, if you get a bad story in La Republica, you may get a bad story in the New York Times as a result of that. Think about it because it is to your benefit."

Our point of view was as much media access as we possibly could no matter who the President was. The Secret Service's attitude was to have minimal exposure to the President. There is a constant battle in embassies between the security officer who is trying to think how he can protect the embassy staff, and the USIS operation, which wants the doors as wide open and as much glass showing as possible. It is a natural conflict which will go through forever, and presidential visits were the same way. We tried to have as much exposure as we possibly could, get as much media coverage as we could, favorable, of course. You are constantly dealing with the U.S. press corps, which wants exclusivity, and the security guys who want protection.

In terms of Ronald Reagan being better accepted or received than Jimmy Carter? No. The Italians were very happy to have a presidential visit, to be recognized. They provided as much cooperation as they could. I never had a presidential visit in Moscow, but [I did have] a Secretary of State visit, and it was a very controlled kind of situation.

Q: Just one last question, did the earthquake down in southern Italy play much of a role there? As we both know I was consul general down there so that was a big deal for me. We had Joe Bertot down there, who was excellent support. How did that play up in Rome?

CALLAWAY: As you know better than I, there are a lot of U.S. politicians with roots in Italy and in that sense, when you are going to have a Senator D'Amato, and you remember better than I do because you dealt more than I did with...

Q: I think Claiborne Pell was there practically before the eartstopped quivering.

CALLAWAY: Right. They wanted to go right out to the village anhave their picture taken.

Q: With a helicopter.

CALLAWAY: That's right, I flew in with him. Not with Pell, with D'Amato. Of course the ambassador is going to be keenly interested when high ranking congressional and administration officials are coming in, so to that extent, and to the extent of helping people, the embassy gets very involved, though not as much as you are involved when you are on the scene. I had been through an earthquake when we were in Caracas and the embassy was damaged, we were right on top of it.

Q: D'amato was terribly unimpressive. He had not even been sworn in as a senator from New York. He came in with monsignor... I never quite figured out who he was. When you all came in, he was running all over the place.

CALLAWAY: All I can remember is that he wanted to be poised on toof rubble piles and have his picture taken again, and again, and again.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and we will pick it up the nextime in '82. You went where?

CALLAWAY: In '82 I went to Managua, Nicaragua.

Q: That was a nice, quiet spot, particularly during the Reagaadministration.

CALLAWAY: And the Sandinista years, yes.

Q: You might have a little to talk about there.

CALLAWAY: Right.

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Q: Today is the 14th of May, 1999. Gil, you were in Nicaragua fro'82 to when?

CALLAWAY: '84.

Q: How did you feel about being assigned there and what were yohearing about the situation before you arrived?

CALLAWAY: I had served in Latin America before and had some Spanish which by this time had become somewhat confused with the Italian. I still retained an interest in Latin American affairs. The Sandinista revolution had kicked out Somoza in 1979. The Reagan administration was making quite a show of being concerned about the Sandinistas - that this was going to become the first foothold on the mainland of Latin America, after Castro in Cuba, of the communists.

When I received this assignment, I objected strenuously. It was the first time I had ever done that in my Foreign Service career. I said I would be very happy to work on Nicaraguan affairs, I was concerned about the issues myself, but I felt that I wanted to come back to Washington because that was where the decisions were being made. I did not want to go to Nicaragua for a variety of reasons, some substantive, but also because I had three young children and the situation, both from a schooling and medical point of view, from everything that we were hearing was deteriorating rapidly.

It ended up that I was ordered to go to Nicaragua and was told that the combination that I had, background in both the Soviet Union and in Latin America, was unique. I'm not sure that I believed that but anyway that was the line they were feeding me, and there was nobody else who could go as the counselor for public affairs at that particular point to Nicaragua. For the first and last time in my Foreign Service career, I went without my family. I chose to do the separation and have them back here in Washington because of the schooling and medical reasons that I mentioned.

I went off quite reluctantly and unhappily to Nicaragua although once I had decided I would accept the assignment, I did a lot of consulting in Washington, both academically and within various agencies that were operating there. I knew people at State, Defense, and the CIA from my Latin American days and from my European days, and I felt that I was pretty well prepared. As a consequence, it turned out to be one of the most fascinating assignments I had. It is sort of like the Soviet Union, you can't say you really enjoyed it, but it was extremely educational and challenging throughout, and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the Nicaraguans and maintain contact with some to this day.

Q: What were you getting as you were doing this briefing, going through both the academic and government agencies? There seemed to be a fairly solid split. Were you getting that?

CALLAWAY: No. To be quite honest what I got was a spectrum of opinion. At one end of the spectrum there were people who were solidly convinced that this was indeed a vital threat to the security of the hemisphere, and the security of the United States. President Reagan at one point, I can't remember the exact quote, but said, "Next week they may be in Harlingen, Texas." At the other end were people who felt that we were beating up on a small, poor, underdeveloped Latin American country which had suffered tremendously over the decades from U.S. intervention. Indeed U.S. marines had been dispatched to Nicaragua on a number of occasions before the second world war and we had maintained a presence there up until the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt when the last of the Marines came out. There was a spectrum in between those extremes of, "we are the devil, or we are the angels."

I found the more time I spent in Nicaragua, the more that was the message I tried to give not only to the Nicaraguan contacts I had, but to the constant flow of American officials and do-gooders, priests, humanitarian workers, students, and you name it, who were a constant responsibility for those of us in the embassy and particularly for those of us who were responsible for meeting and dealing with the public. Both ambassadors that I served with there, and I, were constantly meeting with Americans who were coming down who also matched that spectrum from right to left, or from absolutely opposed, to absolutely in favor. Part of the message I think that we tried to give is that this is a gray situation; there are no right or wrong answers; it is a very difficult and complex situation.

We tried to convey to them that if they really strongly opposed the policy, that unlike the regime that was being installed in Nicaragua at the time, we did have a democracy and they should come back here and inform their elected political leaders. They should get them out of office if they didn't agree with them, or convince them to change their minds if they did. If they strongly felt that this regime was a threat, then we tried to show them a little bit of just what a poor, underdeveloped country Nicaragua was, and in my strong opinion I think it certainly was no direct threat to the power of the United States.

Q: Was Managua itself pretty well devastated by the earthquake? Hait recovered much?

CALLAWAY: It reminded me of nothing so much as a modern day Pompeii. Anyone who has ever visited Pompeii, as you certainly have, is struck by the sense of feeling that you are walking through a city which had been suddenly deserted, devastated to a degree. You see streets, you see parts of buildings, you can certainly get a sense of what shops and homes were like. Downtown Managua, which had been devastated by an earthquake in 1972, so it was just about 10 years later, in which over 5,000 people had been killed, had hardly been reconstructed.

In my opinion, it was one of the nails in the coffin of the Somoza regime that a lot of money went down there, both privately donated money and American aid money, and other sources of income, to help Nicaragua restore itself and recover from this terrible disaster, and it had simply been stolen. It had been used by Somoza and his family and crony connections to build shopping centers and other things. It had not been used in large part to restore the country. This was very obvious to the common people. Nicaragua is a very small country. There are only three million people. People know each other, and they know what is happening in the country. I think that to go down there and see it for yourself, was an affirmation of why Somoza did have to go, not only from a repressive point of view, but from simply a robber baron point of view. He ran it as though it were his private holdings.

One was struck constantly throughout by the U.S. attitude. I presume this is a historic fact, but we deal with a lot of unsavory characters throughout the world. Back in the days when Roosevelt was dealing with Somoza, and the Somoza family goes back that far with the original Anastacio, FDR said, "He's a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch." Some people tended to look at the Sandinistas as well, they are sons of bitches and they are the other guy's sons of bitches; in this case the Soviets or Castro.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you first arrived? Who were the twambassadors?

CALLAWAY: The two ambassadors were both very good career ambassadors. The first was Tony Quainton, who is one of the names, if you haven't...

Q: I've had a long interview with him.

CALLAWAY: Great. He's recently retired as you know after being director general of the Foreign Service. He was replaced by, unfortunately deceased, Harry Bergold. Quainton came with a tremendous amount of experience in underdeveloped areas of the world, and Bergold came in with a lot of experience in communist countries; he had been ambassador to Hungary. They came with different perspectives on the country, but both had quite a bit of background in dealing with Nicaragua.

Q: How did Quainton use you when you arrived? Sort of what did htell you he wanted to be done?

CALLAWAY: Quainton wanted to go as far as he possibly could in normalizing relations, in trying to get some kind of a dialogue going. I thoroughly agreed with him. I like to think of myself as a people person. I like to reach out and so on. One of the disagreements that we had - I thought that Tony wanted to go further than was possible and it turned out that we both thought we were right - he wanted to open a cultural center; a place where we could teach English, have performances, and so on. All of my contacts among the Sandinistas, among the officials and opposition as well, said it wasn't going to work. Indeed it didn't work. It didn't work until a good number of years after I had gone.

He pushed in that direction and I was in favor of pushing as far as we could. Make as many contacts as you can. Convince the Sandinistas that we are not bent on seeing them all hanging from the nearest lamppost, and convince the United States administration that there were advantages to having some kind of relations, some kind of a dialogue, with the Sandinista regime.One of the things that I tried to do, very forcefully during the two years that I was there, was to get a Fulbright exchange program reinstalled. It had existed, and then it had been cut off. I wasn't able to do it from the Sandinista side. They wouldn't agree to it, but neither would the American side. They simply said there is no reason; we are wasting our time; those people are hopeless; we are not going to have this kind of exchange. I felt frustration in both directions about trying to establish that kind of academic and educational exchange program.

Q: When you got there and started sampling, what was your impression of the Sandinista regime? I mean you had your Soviet time and all and your Yugoslav time, what did you think of the Sandinista regime?

CALLAWAY: I tended to agree with Harry Bergold who came later and said, "They are a bunch of rank amateurs. They don't really know what Marxism is all about." The nine commandantees who formed the directorate of the Sandinista regime came from three different factions. Tomas Borge was the oldest and was probably in his 50s at the time. He was by at least a decade, if not more, the oldest member of the nine. He and Carlos Fonseca had been among the original people who had established the Sandinista Party.

Just a little bit of background. Antonio Sandino had been a popular rebel who had fought against the marines in the '20s and '30s. They took his name to epitomize their anti-Yankee, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalistic kind of mantra that they chanted rather frequently. The best that I can read, Sandino was no Marxist. They simply appropriated the name and utilized it as a popular figure.

The commandantees ranged I think from Borge who had struggled a long time and had been out in the hills for a long time, to the Ortega brothers. I think Borge was a rather dedicated, although extremely clever, individual. He was the minister of the interior which means he headed the interior police, and so on, and, as I say, he was a commandante and they all had military responsibilities. Borge maintained several offices. He had his official office as the minister of interior where he would receive official callers. He had a private office which was very small and modest. There was another office where he kept crucifixes all over the wall and showed what a humanitarian and Christian background this country had. Depending on who his visitor was, he would welcome them in one of the three offices.

The Ortega brothers were kind of the leaders. Daniel Ortega was the head of the junta and the president of the country. His brother Humberto was the minister of defense and thereby the head of the army. I think they thought they were Marxists but the things that bothered me more than anything were the foreign advisors that they brought in. They brought in Cubans and East Germans, and this I thought posed more of a danger than the Sandinistas themselves. If we could convince them that they could perform some kind of a revolutionary activity in the country, which it certainly needed given the Somoza background, then we would move along the lines of trying to have a dialogue that Ambassador Quainton, and Bergold in a different way, tried to foster.

Q: In your work, was there a press to deal with?

CALLAWAY: There indeed was a press. The New York Times had a resident there. Others lived in Salvador, and there was a lot going on in El Salvador at the time. One of the aspects of the whole Sandinista situation in Nicaragua was that these self-proclaimed Marxists had taken over, and they were supporting a revolution which was still going on against the government that we were supporting in El Salvador. We tried to reach out to the journalists, a number of whom - New York Times, Time Magazine, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald - sent pretty experienced people in the Latin American area. For example, Steven Kinser was there, who is now in Turkey and before that was in Berlin. Before coming to Nicaragua he had covered Guatemala in Latin America and had written a book about Guatemala and U.S. intervention in '54 in the Guzman regime there. I thought he was a very balanced and critical reporter.

You also had a number of what people derisively call "Sandalistas," people who came down in their sandals and who were very favorably disposed to the Sandinista revolution. They either refused to see, or overlooked mistakes or erroneous directions that more objective observers, in my opinion, felt that the Sandinistas were making. There was too much expropriation of land discouraging any remnants of the old capitalistic system to remain, and this is necessary because you need a transition period. It was difficult to deal with them. We dealt with them as with all reporters, the doors were open. But some of them were pretty openly biased in their opinions. As I say the standard press was pretty balanced in trying to do its reporting.

Dealing with the Nicaraguan journalists was quite a different matter. The Sandinistas established a newspaper, Barricada, the barricades. La Prensa had been the old newspaper of Chamorro and Pedro Joaquin Chamorro had been another nail in the coffin of Somoza. He had been assassinated on the streets of Managua because he had been a very strong critic of the Somoza regime. After Chamorro was assassinated, his widow, Violetta, who subsequently after the Sandinistas became president of Nicaragua, and his son, Pedro Joaquin, Junior, moved into the newspaper and harshly attacked the Sandinista regime. They were really trying to bring democracy, neither from the right nor from the left, but a democratic regime. However, the younger brother of Pedro Joaquin, Carlos, became the chief editor of Barricada.

So the Chamorro family history is interesting and this was repeated a lot in this small country. It was divided right down the middle on the Sandinistas, and how much they could be helped, and how much they could be resisted. We saw it in the newspapers very strongly, in Barricada, the organ of the Sandinista party. La Prensa was still being critical and being censored. Like in an old communist state, you would see whole pages blanked out or blacked out, and they would publish it that way. Sometimes they would get away with it, and sometimes Tomas Borge, the minister of interior, guardian of the internal security, simply ordered the paper taken off the streets because they didn't want to show how much had been censored.

I found that some of the Sandinista media, like Barricada or like the main Sandinista radio station, were pretty open to interviews. We would bring down Otto Reich who was in the State Department at the time playing a very active role in combating what we saw as the disinformation policy of the Sandinistas and the Castroites in Latin America. He visited Nicaragua and we got him interviews with Barricada and on the Sandinista radio station which was, I think, a nod that they had not become as controlled as some people would like to paint them. It was a fascinating mixture of dealing both with the foreign press, who were there covering the revolution, and the Nicaraguan press.

Q: How did you find sort of the American academic community because this was a red hot issue with them? Did you find yourself sort of an outcast?

CALLAWAY: It was divided. There were academics who came down who were very strongly opposed to the Sandinista regime and very critical of it. They had equal academic credentials as the more, what we traditionally tend to think of academics as being, liberal and supportive of the Sandinistas.

People used to ask me, "Don't you find that dealing with the journalists is a real headache, a real pain in the butt?" I used to say that the journalists are sort of third on my list. Some of them are very dedicated, and some of them are very dedicated to espousing their own opinions. I put them ahead of many congressional figures who used to come down and spend a day or two days at the most in Nicaragua, and there were a lot of them who came down. I used to classify them, I used to joke, into two categories, the IWTs and the ITTs. The IWTs were the, "I was there and I know what is going on." The ITTs were the, "I told them; how they ordered them to shape up and fly right.The most difficult group of all to deal with were the religious people who would come down. Either God had told them that the Sandinista regime was the devil incarnate or that the American presence there was the devil incarnate. They were very, very difficult to be swayed. They would come into the embassy. I have sat there as the ambassador and I briefed them, and they would stand up and scream at the ambassador and say, "You're going to hell for what you are doing here!" He took it very well.

Q: Yes, Tony told one story about how some nuns came in and asked if they could pray at the end and he said of course. They all gathered hands, including Tony there, and he found himself in a prayer group praying against Ronald Reagan.

CALLAWAY: Right, and praying for the salvation of his soul becaushe was carrying out that policy, exactly.

Q: How did you find yourself and other officers in the embassy? Were they pretty much, this is just a problem to deal with, or did you find them sort of reflecting the spectrum or not? Did you have trouble with your officers?

CALLAWAY: No. I think they did tend to reflect the spectrum, but I found it a situation similar to working in Moscow. When you are under difficult circumstances, and that can be either physically difficult circumstances or politically, I find the embassy team pulling together. I found that to be the case very much in Nicaragua whether they tended to disagree or to agree with the policy, they pulled together. They were there as professionals working under difficult circumstances. It was a very tightly knit team just as I found the case to be back in Moscow when I had served 10 years before that.

The problem came with some of the Foreign Service nationals. As you well know, USIS overseas generally employees more Foreign Service nationals, both in the cultural and informational side, than most other sections. In the course of my time there, two people were accused by anonymous sources at the time of being spies for the Sandinistas. We looked into this along with the regional security officer. I didn't really feel that there was sufficient evidence on either case, although one was much stronger - circumstantial evidence in my opinion - than the other. The regional security officer and I divided, one went and one didn't go.

It was a very difficult situation because as you well know in many cases our Foreign Service national employees are some of the most dedicated people. They have stuck their necks out, worked for the United States government, and been identified as such for years, through thick and thin. It is always a difficult matter to accuse one of having become a turncoat. It certainly could have been true. The Sandinista secret police certainly knew how to put the screws on people, there is no question about that. We had no question whatsoever that everybody in the embassy, just as we knew in Moscow, was being closely questioned. Whether they crossed the line but, of course, they had no access to classified information either. The Foreign Service nationals had a very difficult time during that period in Nicaragua.

Q: You would have pronouncements coming from the president and then you had Jesse Helms and all, and these people would be talking in apocalyptic terms, and here you are down there living in this country that is kind of not much of a country. I would have thought that it would have been very difficult to deal with this. I mean interpret it, translate it, and keep from giggling almost.

CALLAWAY: Well, there was a Contra war going on, and although the controversy still rages and all the facts still aren't out about just how much we were behind it and how much we were doing, it was a serious situation and we took it very seriously. A war was going on. No matter how much you dismiss their ability to directly threaten the security of the United States, you certainly took seriously some of the actions that they were taking.One of them that I was directly involved in was the educational system. Education and cultural affairs are part of the USIS bag and I tried to establish very close relationships, or as close as possible, with the educational institutions, especially the higher educational institutions. At the National University, the Sandinistas had moved in as communist regimes will do, because they realize the importance of instilling a doctrine in the youth, in the future leadership of the country.

One of the big disappointments that I had was a man by the name of Carlos Tunnerman. He had been a very prominent man, and very well educated in the United States. He was a brilliant man and became the minister of education. I continued to deal with him and I thought we had a dialogue going in which he would admit to certain excess. He later became the ambassador to the United States under the Sandinista regime and that is when we parted company. I could see him continuing to work in the university as a minister of education and being somewhat balanced, but taking the step to actually becoming the spokesman in this country of the Sandinista regime, I was somewhat surprised.

In our effort to interpret what the Reagan administration was saying about Nicaragua, we would try to put it in terms of some of those areas like the educational system, or confiscation of private property, literally taking over houses and forcing people out because a commandante wanted it. We would object to those specific actions.

On the war itself, we were no better informed, quite frankly, than much of the populace. The Contra effort was being run out of other countries like Honduras and in some places in El Salvador. I am sure that some people in the embassy knew more than I did about what was going on, but basically we were not terribly informed and would not address the Sandinistas directly when they raised issues. They would raise an issue and make a protest, and we would respond that we knew nothing about that particular action because it was under the umbrella of the independent Contra activities. It was a difficult situation, to answer in those terms, because it was a civil war in some senses.

Q: Did you feel almost marginalized by these operators who were coming down from the NSC, Ollie North and company, who were kind of running things? I almost feel there wasn't much of a coordinated effort. It was as though you had this not that little of war going on, and it was run out of the NSC, and then the State Department was trying to maintain regular relations. It was a peculiar thing. Did you feel this?

CALLAWAY: Yes, you certainly did. I indicated that when I first was assigned to Nicaragua. I said, "I don't want to go to Nicaragua. I'll be happy to work on Nicaraguan policy but I want to do it from Washington." And that hadn't changed. After that I was assigned on two occasions TDY to the National Security Council and had occasion to sit in on meetings with Ollie North and watch the operation. I must say that I thought it was a highly arrogant attitude from some of these people who had absolutely determined that the Sandinista regime did represent a threat to the United States, whether it was as potential allies of Cuba, supporters of the revolution that was being fostered by the FSLN in El Salvador, or as a potential base for the Soviet Union.

There is no question that the Sandinistas were certainly building up their military and that was a worrisome aspect, not only in the terms of the threat that it could pose to its neighbors, but in terms of what it was taking away from the country. I mentioned earlier the concern about not only the educational system crumbling and becoming ideologically influenced by the Sandinistas, but the medical situation. The reason for that was that the medical supplies were largely flowing to support the military in its fighting with the Contra forces, but also building up an awful lot of camps, air bases of a size which the Sandinista air force didn't have any need. These were concerns.

But I think about people like Ollie North and of seeing him on a couple of occasions coming into meetings - and these with people working for the National Security Council, or representative of the Department of State or the Central Intelligence Agency, or the Department of Defense, all highly qualified people, all highly cleared people - and North if he didn't like the discussion that was going on he would suddenly stand up, whip his papers into a pad and say, "I've got better things to do. I don't need to listen to this," and he'd stalk out. That kind of arrogance which displayed itself within the inner circles, I think, displayed itself rather publicly in his declarations before the Congress; "If this is what we thought was right to do, we went ahead and did it, and we weren't going to be bent by laws." I think that is a danger to a democracy.

Q: How about staffers from the various congressional committees and staffers to individual people in Congress, did they present a particular challenge?

CALLAWAY: Staffers came down. Nicaragua at that point was enough on the scene that they would usually accompany members. It was good that a member himself or herself came down. Once again, they represented a spectrum. One that I remember very strongly, who was a senator at the time, is now Secretary of Defense. Cohen was a Republican member of Congress at the time. A very opened and balanced "Tell me, and I want to learn," attitude.

Q: You're talking about Secretary William Cohen from Maine.

CALLAWAY: Exactly. He was very good. Others came down and knew it all. I'll tell you about the famous Kissinger Commission on Central America. There was a spread from Henry Cisneros to Jeane Kirkpatrick. They came and visited all of the Central American countries, I guess, or most of them to sort of assess the situation in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Nicaragua and El Salvador were the focus at the time. The one that I faulted the most was Jeane Kirkpatrick who refused to come to Nicaragua, the only member of the commission that I recall, because she felt that her life was in danger. I think the embassy assured the rest of the commission, her included, that it was not in danger, but that was the extent I think of the fear of what this little country represented to some people - that they might be assassinated if they came.I don't think a lot was learned, quite frankly, by the Kissinger Commission, but at least they came. They sat down, they met. Part of that I will hasten to add was the Sandinistas fault. The Sandinistas can be very clever. I mentioned Borge, who could go into his crucifix decorated room and be very convincing and disingenuous, and apparently very flexible. But on this occasion, they got their backs up about the Kissinger Commission and it was a very entrenched attitude that they displayed.

The worse case of that that I saw, and I think one of most stupid things the Sandinistas did in the entire two years I was there, was their reception for the Pope. Nicaragua is a very, very Catholic country. It is basically a strongly, religious Catholic country in which the people are very devout. The Pope is the head of the Catholic Church and he was coming to Nicaragua, and they were terribly proud of it. The Sandinistas were terribly proud that the Pope, as when he went to Cuba recently, had decided to come to Nicaragua.

They organized, and they did this deliberately. Women who, I do not doubt for a moment, had lost their sons in the struggle with the Contras, heckled the Pope. They said, "We want peace. Holy Father go tell the bloody Americans what they are doing." This did not go over with the Pope and it did not go over with the majority of the population. You do not insult the Holy Father. It is not his war and you simply do not interrupt the mass. They interrupted the mass which is a very sacred ceremony for Catholics and it was a dumb, stupid thing to do. They kept making mistakes like this. You would think they were about to take a step forward, and they would insert their foot solidly in their mouth.

Q: What was the role of the Cubans and the Soviets when you werthere?

CALLAWAY: Well they were certainly there and the Nicaraguans made of point of identifying themselves much more closely with the Castro revolution in Cuba, being a Latin America country, being a country which had defied directly the United States, than they ever did with the Soviet Union. They were wise in that sense to keep a certain amount of distance. Of course, the Soviets funneled a lot of the aid indirectly through Cuba rather than directly.

The Soviets kept pretty much to themselves as they do in a lot of overseas missions, as do the Chinese to this day. They live within a closed compound so you really didn't see them very much on the scene. They did not make their presence visible. The Cubans were the same way. More of our information there came from our intelligence sources or just from sources that would go out and interview people and say, "Do you know some Cubans?" "Yes, three guys came by and had a beer in my place yesterday." For the public in Nicaragua they tried to portray it as an indigenous revolution. As I mentioned, along with the "Sandalistas," which were the followers of the revolution, there were some nasty folks in there like Libyans and others who were advising the Sandinistas on how to handle their revolution.

Q: Speaking of the Sandalistas, how about the people coming over from Western Europe, particularly from the socialist, the left wing side? Did you see your friends from Italy and all of that?

CALLAWAY: We did indeed, and representations from some Scandinavian countries and people like Greenpeace and Oxfam were there. Some of them were doing very good work. Some were working out in the rural areas of Nicaragua helping with crop reform, with health problems, and so on. Others were very active in the demonstrations. I talked before about the church and this was where a lot of influence came through. There was very definitely the liberation theology strain of Catholicism in Latin America which went back far before the Sandinista revolution.

Q: The Maryknoll sisters?

CALLAWAY: The Maryknoll sisters. The foreign minister of Nicaragua was a Maryknoll priest who had actually studied in the United States. The minister of education after Tunnerman was a Jesuit priest, and the minister of culture was a brother of the minister of education who belonged to, I've forgotten what order, but they were all Catholic priests. This gave the church in Rome problems too, because they wanted to separate political ideology from religious ideology and they were disturbed by this mix. They never went so far as to excommunicate the two priest ministers, but they did insist, which the brothers ignored, that they could not perform the sacraments, that they could not be active as priests. They ignored this. There was this liberation theology group and there were some very active ministers who came down, who were of the extreme left, extremely favorable to the revolution, from the United States. There was very definitely this element active within the populace of Nicaragua as well, liberation churches or churches of the revolution.

Q: Did many of these people sort of bypass the embassy or did thego to shout at you?

CALLAWAY: They shouted on occasions. A lot of people ask me, did I ever feel in mortal danger in Nicaragua? My answer is only on one occasion was I concerned and that was during the invasion of Grenada. I think when that invasion took place, the Sandinistas sincerely believed for a number of days that only a few days would pass before they were next. There were tanks outside the embassy and the turrets were pointed towards the embassy, not away from the embassy. There was concern for a few days.

The ambassador, who at time was Tony Quainton, got on the phone to the minister of the interior, Tomas Borge and there was a discussion about how it's not going to happen. There was a pretty violent demonstration which formed downtown which was maybe a mile and a half of so from where the embassy was located. It was announced, it was in the papers, that they were going to march on the embassy, but it was called off. The demonstration took place and there were rocks thrown, shouts, and so on, but they did not come to the embassy.

I think the Sandinistas themselves, within the course of a little more than 24 hours, perhaps 48 hours, accepted the assurances that the paratroopers were not coming and that that kind of a demonstration - unlike in my humble opinion what is happening in China right now - could get out of hand, so they defused it a bit. They didn't call it off entirely, but they did defuse it. That was the kind of dialogue that at times you could have with the Sandinistas.

There was another occasion that I recall very fondly. There was a very close, very young advisor to Daniel Ortega that I used to meet with. The Ortega brothers themselves were quite young at the time, but this fellow must have been in his mid-20s at the most. I've forgotten how I met him, but we would meet almost twice a month on weekends and just go for sort of walks in the jungle, if you will, and just talk about a lot of things. He was a very dedicated Sandinista. He claimed not to be pro-Soviet Union at all. We would have extremely frank exchanges and I hope it was as useful to his side as I felt it was to our side. We both knew that we were going back and reporting on the exchanges that took place. That was the sort of thing that I never felt that I had in the Soviet Union.

Q: As far as being communists, you say that they were amateurs, was it that things weren't ripe for it, or they were sort of communists of opportunity?

CALLAWAY: That's a good question. I think it is a combination. I think some of them were definitely communists of opportunity, or Marxists, if you will, of opportunity. Conditions certainly weren't right. I don't know that much about the history of Russia, but I think that the Russian Orthodox Church was a strong influence which continued to be an influence after the Soviets took over. From my reading of history, one of the things that was clear throughout is that it was never as strong an influence in impeding the development of communism/socialism, the establishment of Lenin's regime and then Stalin's, as the Catholic Church was in impeding the development of Marxism in Nicaragua, at least in that short period of time. Who knows whether it could have taken place over a longer period of time, but the church and the strong deep rooted faith of the people were clearly important factors.

And another thing, I think that in spite of all the propaganda that the Sandinistas put out continually, the Nicaraguan people were basically not anti-American, they were pro-American. The history that the Sandinistas tried to draw of the U.S. intervention was always mollified for a lot of the "common" Nicaraguan folks that I talked with who remembered very fondly the uncle, or the grandfather, who had a job, or who worked with the Marines when they were there and helped them build roads, or set up the railroad system, or the telegraph wires. It was a mixture of "Wes, we weren't independent, but you are a big country and we are a small country." You have to remember that one of the things in Nicaraguan history, and I've forgotten exactly when this was, is that they petitioned the U.S. Congress to become a state at one time.

Q: Were you sensing when you were there, that the Sandinistas really weren't getting the hearts and minds of the people as much as they thought they had, because within a relatively short period of time they had an election. When was the election?

CALLAWAY: I can't remember. It wasn't that long ago. I don't thinthey lasted ten years. It was maybe '88.

Q: Anyway they had an election and they thought they were going to win and they sure as hell didn't. I was wondering whether we sensed any of that or not because this revolution was portrayed as popular, Somoza was awful, and therefore these guys are good, and that sort of thing.

CALLAWAY: I was not in Nicaragua at the time but I was still following it and I was still keeping in touch with people down there. I don't think there was any question at all that the Sandinistas thought that they were going to win. I don't think that there is any question that a lot of people in the U.S. government thought they were going to win too. I think the Sandinistas were overestimating their popularity, and I think the United States government was overestimating the control that the Sandinistas had. They thought they could flip a switch and say, 92 percent voted for us, as we have seen in a lot of other elections. They both turned out to be wrong. We certainly worked for it and we poured money into there sort of harking back to earlier elections in Italy where we poured money and influence.

I think clearly that what happened was that people didn't like Somoza, but they didn't like what the Sandinistas were doing either. They wanted somewhere in between. Violetta Chamorro who was a very popular figure, turned out not to be such a tremendous politician when she subsequently became president, but she was considered to be a very honest woman, an honorable woman.

I think that Daniel Ortega was kind of a stiff figure. I saw him many times at popular rallies and so on. Tomas Borge, whom I've mentioned a number of times, was much more of a charismatic figure within the revolution and could draw more emotion from the crowd than either of the Ortega brothers who were much more in the forefront of the revolution. I think a lot of factors led to their downfall. They are still around, but they certainly haven't come back and I think they thought they would.

Q: Part of your work is always to reach groups in a country, friendly or what have you. Did you feel that there were any groups that you could try to reach?

CALLAWAY: I mentioned going out to the universities and we did try to do that as much as we could possibly do. We weren't allowed to do a lot of speaking engagements in the universities, so we would meet with small groups of students and professors. I thought that was effective. We tried to do cultural events. Occasionally we would be allowed to bring down a performing group and stage it, but there weren't a lot of cultural activities, period. The Sandinistas continued to have popular cultural rallies like, if you remember, the L'Unita fiestas in Italy, in which they would have a fair and that kind of entertainment. There wasn't a lot of highbrow entertainment, but jazz groups and things like that we would try to bring down.

We would try to reach the people through the media, as I mentioned, and there I think we were relatively successful; more successful than I thought possible. Another indication of that uncertainty of Sandinista control and the grayness of devotion to the Sandinista cause, even from people in such important positions as the head of Sandinista radio stations and the head of Sandinista television stations, was that they wouldn't find an excuse not to interview an Otto Reich. They would be either persuaded or bullied by us saying, "You've got to let this man have his say; you can rebut him if you want to, but let him get on." So I think in a variety of ways we reached out.

In other ways it was difficult because it wasn't a greatly developed country, and that would have been the case under Somoza or under the Sandinista regime. I traveled as much as I could. The east coast, the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, which was an area which had been populated largely by former slaves, was an area of resistance to the Sandinistas, more so than the more urban area. Therefore we were never allowed to travel to the east coast. There were certain areas of the country that we were cut off from, but we were not restricted, as we certainly were in the Soviet Union, in that we didn't have to get permission to travel; we could go out to places. In one embarrassing incident for me, I ended up in a port city on the morning after the Contras had blown up some of the facilities there. I had to answer a lot of questions about "Who knows, and why am I here?"

Q: What was the feeling in the embassy towards the Contra war?

CALLAWAY: Well, you talk about gray shades again. Arturo Cruz was a highly respected intellectual and former businessman who was part of the Contra cause. The embassy tried to work as closely with him as we could while he was still in the country and we encouraged people, once he left the country, to work with him. I think the embassy attitude was that there were contras, which means against, opposition to the Sandinista regime like Violetta Chamorro who would certainly never call herself a Contra and never actively endorsed the violence of the Contra resistance. These were areas that we encouraged more collaboration and cooperating with. The more militaristic side of things is something which was not organized directly by any of the areas that we were working with in Nicaragua at the time.

Q: Was it pretty much understood that the Nicaraguans were involvein El Salvador?

CALLAWAY: Yes. I don't think there is any question about it. On a couple of occasions when intelligence was released saying "Here's what happened; here's a map," the Sandinistas would admit it to the extent of saying, "Well, it happened, but we didn't instigate it, or we didn't bless it," and they would sort of fudge it in that way. They were certainly sympathetic to the FMLN, there was no question of that. The FMLN was also divided. I didn't know as much about how they were organized as I did about what was going on in Nicaragua, but there was not one centralized command and in that way the Sandinistas could sort of pick and choose which element or faction of the FMLN they would support

Q: What about while you were doing this, this obviously had very high priority, did you feel that, of course it was in hostile territory, but was USIA putting a lot of resources into Nicaragua that they could use?

CALLAWAY: In terms of the resources that I could use, it was tremendous. I never had a question. Anything I asked for, I could get away with. The resources that weren't brought to bear, and I think that up to a certain level within USIA I was supported, was in an effort to get a Fulbright exchange program going, as I said. The money never came because the program was never approved. Anything that I could do, yes, the resources were there.

Q: How about while all of this was going, was there an active Nicaraguan students going kind of on their own with their families up to the United States getting an education and then coming back?

CALLAWAY: Much less so than had been the case in the past. The Chamorro family, for example, had all been educated outside of Nicaragua, mostly in Canada. It is an interesting choice for a family to decide that they were going to be educated overseas, but they wouldn't choose the States.

Q: It makes good political sense.

CALLAWAY: Exactly. A lot of the families who had the wherewithal to send their kids overseas were out of the country by that time. I lived in an absolutely fabulous house which I've never lived in before or since with a swimming pool and a garden. This belonged to a family which had fled the country. They had fled voluntarily; they weren't forced out. As I mentioned earlier, some people were forced out if the commandantees coveted a certain house. A lot of the wealthier families who would have sent their kids to school were not in the country anymore. They were riding it out in Miami, or New York, or other places. There was not a lot of income coming in for people at the time so it was difficult to continue the flow that had taken place in the Somoza years.

Q: Did you feel the fine hand of Charlie Wick, the head of USIA,while you were there?

CALLAWAY: Wick was the head of USIA during the eight years of Ronald Reagan, and this was certainly during that time. No, to be honest with you, the resources were there, but I dealt more directly with the Latin American area of the U.S. Information Agency at the time, and there was never any question of support. To be quite honest with you, I can't even remember if Wick came to Nicaragua during that time. We certainly had some high level visitors, as I mentioned, who came down, Kissinger and others. Wick came to Italy when I was there on a couple of occasions, and he certainly put his hand very actively in when he was interested in doing things like setting up WorldNet television, but those sorts of things were not going on in Nicaragua.

Q: How about while you were there was the CIA, because it was ihostile territory, a quiet group or were they pretty active?

CALLAWAY: They were a quiet group, in my observations. It was a small embassy. It had been a small embassy before the revolution, but it was even smaller afterwards. For example, after the earthquake in 1972, we had a very large AID mission there, and that was completely closed down while I was there. I think there were two people left when I arrived, the director of the AID mission and one other person, and they closed it out entirely. So those missions within a U.S. embassy overseas which tend to be large, were not there. The defense attachï¿½'s office, which had been large because we had been helping with the Somoza military effort, was down to about three attachï¿½s. They were occasionally harassed but they were not ever forced out of the country.

A number of people, including the political counselor, were declared persona non grata. They were labeled as spies and we had to deny that and say, "You've falsely accused these people and we protest their expulsion from the country." There was that kind of harassment, but in terms of the overall mission, it was a small group, we all knew each other, and, as I mentioned earlier, in difficult circumstances we came together. I can't remember what the size of the mission was, but it was not a big one.

Q: Was there much consultation or coordination, with our embassiein El Salvador, Honduras, or Guatemala?

CALLAWAY: Yes, I think so. I certainly did. I also met pretty frequently with Washington as well, meeting with U.S. Information Agency officials or other officials, in either Miami or Washington. At least every three months or so I would be in the States. I made several trips to Panama which is where the Southern Command was located, for briefings, talks, and exchanges of impressions, and so on, with the military. I traveled several time to Costa Rica, El Salvador and to Honduras. The only country in the area that I didn't get to while I was there was Guatemala and that was because I simply ran out of time. There was a lot of consultation and my impression is the ambassador was certainly back quite frequently for consultations, and the military attachï¿½s would go down to Panama on a regular basis.

There was an effort to coordinate Central American policy. One of the things that I'll mention a little bit later is one of the assignments that I had subsequently in the research division of USIA, which does public opinion polling. While I was in Nicaragua, my colleagues, my counterparts, the public affairs counselors and others, would coordinate on formulating the questions that would be asked of the populace so that we could compare what people in Nicaragua are thinking as opposed to what people in Honduras are thinking about the revolution in Nicaragua, about the revolution in El Salvador, that sort of thing.

Q: How about Voice of America, was that very important there or not,or other broadcasts?

CALLAWAY: Voice of America was certainly there. We tried to ascertain, I think rather consistently throughout the time I was there, just how much radio was listened to. A lot of people didn't have electricity in the interior of the country and so short-wave broadcasting, which a lot of people think is outmoded, was important. I never really came to an honest conclusion on that. We formulated programs, we would have frequent interviews with opposition leaders when they were visiting the States on the Voice of America and broadcast it back into the country. There were a couple of suspicions that the Sandinistas were trying to jam the broadcast at times, but it might have been a generator which had just gone on the blitz or something. I'm not sure they ever got that organized.

Q: You left there in '84.

CALLAWAY: Right.

Q: At that time how did you think things were going? WhitheNicaragua?

CALLAWAY: I think we were still trying to be convince Washington that cooperation could give us as many benefits as violent confrontation. The position I came to back here was what I had asked for two years before. I was asked by Tony Motley, who was the assistant secretary for Latin America at the time, to come back to the State Department on detail and become the spokesman for the Latin American region, for ARA at the time. My deputy had come directly out of El Salvador so you can get some sense of what the whole Latin American region was focusing on at the time.

I thought that what I would try to do was to continue to spread the word that it was a gray situation; that it was not a black and white situation; that there were divisions among the Sandinistas; that there were people that we could work with down there. I think the assumption is sort of like what it was with the Soviet Union as late as maybe 1988 or so, that we are going to be dealing with these people for a while and we might as well try to work with those elements that can be more malleable. It became more difficult because after I came into that position in the State Department, it became more violent; it became more of a military situation than a negotiating situation.

Q: You came back in '84 and you were with the ARA bureau at thState Department from when to when?

CALLAWAY: For a year until '85 when Tony Motley left and Elliot Abrams assumed the assistant secretaryship. Most of my days were spent preparing press guidance for the noon briefing for the press spokesman for the Department. In those days we would coordinate very closely and have almost every morning a conference call with the White House, the Defense Department, the State Department. We would work out who was going to respond to which questions. As we used to joke, if it was good news, the White House will announce it; if it was bad news, flip to State and let them handle it.

Almost every afternoon we did backgrounding, talking with journalists who were covering Latin America very closely at the time. Some of them I had known in Latin American, and some of them covered the State Department for years. It was an awful lot of hair splitting and analysis, and just general backgrounding on what had come out in the morning, either the guidance that had been prepared for the briefings, or what had been announced in the briefings.

I found it a difficult year because as I said I thought that the policy, in my opinion, was gearing more and more towards the military. Quite frankly I sat down and had a heart to heart talk with the new assistant secretary, Elliot Abrams, who asked me to stay on. I asked him, "What's coming?" and he said more military. I said, "I'd not like to stay, thank you," and that was that.

Q: What was your impression of the press corps working with thState Department during this '84 to '85 period?

CALLAWAY: I was very impressed with the State Department press corps. I thought they were a very professional group. On occasion I would have to deal with the White House press people. I hold the State Department press corps in much higher esteem. The White House has to cover everything. Not only domestic policy, but the first lady eating in Omaha today.

Q: And highly politicized.

CALLAWAY: Yes, and highly politicized, and very domestically oriented. I was a Foreign Service officer. I am interested in international affairs. The press corps in the State Department is interested in it, too. They are knowledgeable, and they are good. I came to know some of them quite well and trusted them. I think that this is kind of the background situation that you can have. Almost every afternoon I was on the phone at great length with a lot of the journalists giving more detail or nuances to what was going on.

Q: In '85 where did you go?

CALLAWAY: In '85, I went to the office of research at USIA. It is heavily concentrated on foreign public opinion polling. They don't directly conduct it themselves, but they commission foreign polling organizations to conduct polls within every country that we can get into, that we are allowed into, to ask Russian citizens what they think of U.S. relations, or what they think of Brezhnev, or whatever, however sensitive you can get.

I went over as a director of the European area. After I had been there for less than a year, the director of the research office, who was a political appointee, asked me to become his deputy director. Traditionally, as is often the case in the Foreign Service, sometimes the director was a career person; in this case, he was a political appointee and he asked a career officer to be his deputy. We would take these raw polls and the analysts in each of the geographic regions would study them, put them in a context and say, this is the way the question was put; this is what they think in Nicaragua; this is what they think in Honduras. They would do charts and graphs.

A lot of the time nobody pays the slightest bit of attention to it. On one occasion though, I had to go over to the White House and work with Larry Speakes who was doing a briefing on the results of a poll done throughout Central America on the attitude towards the Sandinistas. It got right to the White House level because it was what they wanted to hear. It was legitimate. We didn't skew the results. The results showed that a lot of people in Central America were very concerned about the Sandinista regime.

Q: I would have thought that for a person who as been as active as you had been, since the polls were farmed out to other people and all, this would be a good solid administrative job, and that you would have been somewhat restive.

CALLAWAY: Well, we did a lot of editing and that was the fun part of it. The analysts would do their drafting. Most of the people were civil servants with a strong background in public opinion polling, so the drafts were kind of dull when they got to us. We tried to put it into the kind of language and the kind of presentation that would interest political people on the Hill, or in the White House, or at the State Department. I enjoyed doing that. It was fun to try to take a rather straightforward product that was presented to us and to put it in a context that would be exciting, sexy.

Q: Let's talk about some of the areas. Were you able to do opiniopolls in the Soviet Union, or China, or places like that?

CALLAWAY: Most of them were very limited in the Soviet Union at the time, and in China. A lot of them would be done with either ï¿½migrï¿½s or people who were traveling. They wouldn't always necessarily be done scientifically in this case. There would be interviews with people that would then be construed to convey public opinion. We did a lot of what we called focus group studies as well, which aren't scientific public opinion polls either, where you get a group of people around a room, have a discussion, and then follow the train of thought from that. There was legitimate criticism, I think. It wasn't all scientific. We were looking for particular things of interest to the foreign policy establishment and would try to get at it any way we could. They did public opinion polling in Hong Kong because a lot of Chinese flowed in and out of Hong Kong.

Q: What about Wick during that time, was he very interested in whayou all were doing?

CALLAWAY: He was interested. Wick had come from a Hollywood background and from a very public media background, so he was always more interested in television, in the programmatic aspects of USIA. Getting WorldNet was one of his wonderful ideas that he had been able to persuade the President, Ronald Reagan, (close family ties there) to support. He felt that this was one way we were going to win hearts and minds, by beaming television programs into countries all over the world. I think that his idea at one point had been to do it by satellite so that you could directly go into countries. As you will recall, the Soviets were very worried about this. This was part of the whole freedom of information versus interference in internal activities debate that was going on with the Helsinki Accords. I think he was more interested in that aspect of USIA programs than he was in more scientific polling. But if the White House was interested in it, then Charlie Wick was interested in it.

Q: Were you still in Washington when the Iran-Contra business bleup?

CALLAWAY: Yes. I can't remember exactly what year that was.

Q: I think it was '86.

CALLAWAY: It was still Reagan, definitely. I was there until '88,until the election. Yes.

Q: What did you do after the polling job?

CALLAWAY: After that I was sent back to Italy. I went back as thcultural attachï¿½ to Rome.

Q: This would have been '88?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: Did you get involved in the Iran-Contra thing? Did anybody comat you saying what were you doing, and why, and when?

CALLAWAY: Interestingly enough, I was approached by a few of the correspondents and journalists that I had been in touch with; Roy Gutman, for example, from Newsday was writing a book at the time. But I left in '85 and sort of moved out of direct involvement in the area.

As I mentioned, I was detailed over to the National Security Council on two occasions, but it wasn't with Latin America, even though I would see old colleagues and friends that I had worked with. One time was for Reagan's first meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva to handle the press aspects of that, and the other time was because I had a background in Italy. It was for a G-7 conference in Venice. Even though I was back, and on a couple of occasions would see Ollie North, on those occasions it wasn't in a Latin American context.

Q: You were in Italy from '88 to when? CALLAWAY: Until '92, another four years.

Q: You were cultural counselor?

CALLAWAY: Yes.

Q: What does that mean?

CALLAWAY: It means all of the bi-national, educational, cultural programs, and exchanges. Not only bi-national, but in some cases multinational. For example, Italy is extremely rich, both intellectually and culturally, and in many instances it gets along just fine without official government involvement. A lot of the programs that we had there were facilitated. We would help the Venice Bienalle in which the U.S. has a pavilion, but we were not providing the bulk of the funding for it at all. We would help organize a symphony orchestra visit, or an exchange of artists between the two countries.

One of the areas where I was very heavily involved was the Fulbright exchange commission, and that is very big in Italy. There it is basically the two governments. One of the aspects though, particularly during that time, and I don't know if the word was in use then, but privatization was moving in, in which we were trying to move away from government support for educational and cultural programs, to get more private sector involvement. We worked very hard to get both U.S. companies, mainly based in Europe or Italy like American Express, IBM, and others, or Italian companies which were interested in helping people get a further education, and to persuade them that this would benefit their own company in the future. Grantees might come back and work for them; a broader international education was a good thing for both countries and a good thing for their companies.

We sent several hundred students and professors in each direction, each year on the Fulbright exchange program. The whole selection process and where they are going to be placed in each country, was something that involved the bi-national commission very much. We would be meeting at least several hours each week to discuss what programs we would sponsor in the future, what institutions we would deal with, and who would be selected.

Q: Did you see a difference in American-Italian relations?

CALLAWAY: I did indeed toward the end of that time because this was just when the old post-war regime in Italy, which we all knew and loved, or at least were familiar with, was beginning to crumble. There were investigations into corruption and how the political parties had all, without exception, raked off funds from various deals with business to support their activities, and how judges mainly based in the Milan area were beginning to have a tremendous amount of power to investigate high ranking politicians and businessmen. There were a series of suicides and resignations that came out of this. This was all just beginning to happen.

We had dealt with Italy since 1945, and in some instances since 1943, on the basis of the Christian Democrats being natural allies and the Communist Party of Italy being natural enemies. All that began to fall apart. The Communist Party, whose headquarters was one block away from where I lived in the center of Rome, had re-designated itself as the party of the democratic left. They had taken the hammer and sickle from being a center part of their emblem, and put it down at the bottom of a tree as sort of a seed.

Q: A rose or something?

CALLAWAY: No, the rose was the Socialist Party symbol. This was of a spreading oak tree to show that they were growing beyond their roots. A lot of the officials that we dealt with (I earlier mentioned Radio-Television Italy) were political appointees. I noted that the three major radio and television networks were Christian Democratic, socialist, and communist. The same was true for cultural institutions that we dealt with - they were largely political appointees. Now these people were losing their jobs; they were very concerned about their futures.

A lot of the contacts that we had began to get either shaky or be gone. These were people that we worked with in setting up the art show in Venice, or at the Ministry of Culture in trying to arrange more exchange programs, or blocking the illicit sale of Italian art which had been exported out of the country, or at the Ministry of Education where we were trying to help the Italians establish a junior college system. From '88 to '92, it was moving in that direction. It was fascinating to watch, and it is still fascinating to watch it.

Q: Who was the ambassador in this '88 to '92 period?

CALLAWAY: When I first went back, believe it or not Maxwell Rabb was still there. I went out with Rabb, came back with Rabb, and for one year he was still there. I think that Max Rabb really thought that with George Bush being elected as president, he was going to stay on for yet another four years. I think he was a terribly disappointed man that it didn't work out that way. After a lot of rumors he was replaced by a fellow named Peter Secchia. Secchia was a Republican businessman from Michigan who had been very influential in George Bush's campaign in helping George Bush win the nomination. By the name, he had an Italian background, but he did not speak Italian. I think it was his grandfather who had come over and established himself well. He was mainly a political advisor and a political donor to the Bush campaign. He was more of a purely political appointee than I had dealt with before.

Q: He had been given a rather rough time by the American presbefore he came out.

CALLAWAY: Yes, and after he got there, too.

Q: As being very crude and just not up to diplomatic standards, whatever those might be. You must have gotten involved in having to deal with this didn't you, on the whole USIS side?

CALLAWAY: Right. As I had mentioned, Richard Gardner during his time had been extremely involved on the intellectual, cultural, and educational side of Italian-American affairs and had been very active. Maxwell Rabb in his eight year tenure, was much less so, but still there were probably 50 American educational institutions which had either summer programs or four year programs in Italy, mostly based around Florence and Rome, but throughout the country.

Secchia didn't come from this kind of background at all. On the Fulbright exchange program he sort of said, "Let my wife do that." He was a businessman and a politician. In my opinion Peter Secchia did extremely well in those areas. He did well in dealing with politicians and in dealing with businessmen. He did less well when it came to the intellectual side, the cultural side of life. Those of us who have served there know that this is very important in Italy. He had a sort of "slap you on the back, and let's talk frankly" attitude. That went over with some elements of the population that he dealt with, and much less with others. Not speaking the language was a problem, though he tried very hard. But it is difficult if you come at it especially with a background where people expect you to speak. "Peter Secchia, you come from this little village up north and don't speak our language?"

Q: Did he understand what the problem was and try to work with you to say, okay, this is the way I'm used to dealing but how should I deal here, and that type of thing, or was it pretty much cleaning up after him?

CALLAWAY: I think that Secchia tended to realize his shortcomings and be almost brutally honest about them at times. He wouldn't dismiss things that he didn't know that well and feel that comfortable with. He wouldn't say that's not important enough and I'm not going to support it. He just wouldn't be involved in it. Often as you know, no matter what the program is, you want the ambassador, the representative of the president, to be there at the opening of this or that, and that is where it was difficult. It was difficult because he felt uneasy. He felt that maybe a very erudite presentation would be given by the Italian before him and the visiting American professor after him. It was difficult to persuade him that sometimes just his presence was what was needed, not necessarily his contributions. His wife was very active, a very dedicated lady. She did sit on the Fulbright commission and was very active. She stood in his place in many instances and did quite well.

Q: Any major issues that you had to deal with why you were there?

CALLAWAY: As I mentioned earlier when I was the press attachï¿½ about 10 years before when we were putting the cruise missiles in, and now we were taking them out. That was an issue which affected the entire mission. Even more important were the political changes taking place in Italy. I can remember talking to a very good friend of mine, the chief of the Los Angeles Times bureau, and him saying, "I don't have any contacts any more. Everybody I know is either in jail, dead, or out of the country." This was across the board and I think this was a difficult process not only at our embassy, but for all the people who had to deal with the Italians, and the Italians themselves.

I mentioned Joseph LaPalombara's book from Yale University, Democracy Italian Style, I think is the title of the book. It is a very good description of how, when you think Italy is going to fall apart any minute, it puts itself together. This time, it really was falling apart in terms of the political establishment.

Q: Was there concern about criminal elements, corruption, that type of thing? Was there a feeling that it was worse, better, drugs, the whole business?

CALLAWAY: We talked earlier about the influence of the Red Brigades and the danger that they posed and the fact that with a lot of cooperation Italy had been able to pretty well overcome and defeat that threat. What they didn't defeat and overcome was the Mafia. The Mafia continued to operate on various levels. They continued to attack them, but some very high-ranking officials who had dealt effectively with the Red Brigades were assassinated by the Mafia, blown up in Sicily. Some of the accusations that were beginning to be made by some of the judges against some of the old-line politicians were that they had worked hand in glove with the Mafia throughout all these years, and that this is the way that they had held it together; that it was a thoroughly corrupt system; that they never really went after the Mafia. For example, one of the accusations against Andreotti is that he had been responsible for the death of journalists who were probing too far, and had been paid off directly by Mafia bosses in Sicily.

Q: Were we concerned about reporting this back to Washington? Werwe trying to sort of stay out of this whole thing?

CALLAWAY: No, I think we were quite concerned. I mean Italy is important to us in many aspects. It is one of the G-7, a charter member of the European Union, and very important militarily. We have a lot of bases in Italy. The Soviet Union had not collapsed yet so there was still concern. Libya, a constant concern to us, is to the south of Italy. Some attacks had been made on some Italians by Libyans, so there was a concern about terrorism. There was concern about drug flow. A lot of aspects of it were of considerable concern to us about whither Italy. I think we are still concerned. There is a book that I just started reading recently called The Italian Guillotine, by Stan Burnett. I don't know if you have his name or not.

Q: The name is familiar.

CALLAWAY: He is another one worth talking with. Stan was the public affairs counselor in Rome for part of my first tour there, and subsequently wrote this book when he was at the Center for Strategic and International Studies here in Washington, CSIS. He wrote it with an Italian co-author. It is a probing study of just who some of these Italian judges are. Stan's basic thesis is that there was a political motivation to what they were doing, too. They claimed to be investigating corruption and going after anybody who is corrupt. His thesis is that they didn't necessarily go after leftist corrupt officials. The former Italian Communist Party, in other words which became basically the party of the democratic left, was pretty well immune from these probings that went on, whereas they went hammer and tongs after the Christian Democrats, the republicans, the socialists, the liberals.

Q: By the time you left, how was the Italian body politic doing ithose days?

CALLAWAY: Confusion, real confusion. There was real concern about where Italy was going. I think we became a little more confident when Romano Prodi became the prime minister. Berlusconi had become the prime minister at the time that I was there. That was a confusing situation because he himself had been accused by some of the magistrates of being involved with the Socialist Party. Craxi himself, who was a former prime minister and head of the Socialist Party, had been so pursued and accused by the judges that he had fled the country and still lives in Tunisia.

There was a lot of confusion whether Berlusconi was a new wave? He was a businessman but he also held a lot of the private television stations as I had mentioned. Had he used his television stations to unethically influence the campaign? Then there were a series of others. There was a lot of confusion which at times seemed to be cleared up but now we are seeing another period of uncertainty.

Q: You were dealing with the cultural field, were you feeling any change in the role of America in Europe, in Italy, and vice versa? Had this changed at all or were we less the center?

CALLAWAY: I think the move toward Europe as an entity was progressing right along. In '88 you had Gorbachev and you had moves towards perestroika and glasnost. I think there was a feeling that things were really happening in Europe; that there could be an entity in Europe to deal with a changing Soviet Union. I don't think anybody thought about the demise of the Soviet Union at the time. I think the United States was still terribly popular with jazz, music, blue jeans, and McDonalds, which a lot of people in Italy opposed strongly. You probably remember when the first one went in, "We'll never accept this!" It's probably one of the most popular restaurants in Rome now.

Q: American movies?

CALLAWAY: Yes. The Italian movie industry is terribly important. There is an area that we dealt a lot with. We tried very hard to have more cooperation between Italian movie companies and American movie companies. The MPAA sold an awful lot of movies in Italy but there was concern about piracy because some of the movies there would make their way into places like China and the Soviet Union where piracy laws and restrictions are much less followed. There was a lot of cooperation, a feeling that Europe itself was becoming more important in its own right.

Q: In '92 you took off from Italy again?

CALLAWAY: Again, yes, sadly, reluctantly. They dragged me out othere.

Q: Where did you go?

CALLAWAY: This was very different. I came back to Washington. I had been asked by the deputy director of the U.S. Information Agency to be his executive assistant. It was a small office. There was the deputy director, his assistant, and two secretaries; that was it. We were right in the front office with the director of the U.S. Information Agency whose office wasn't much bigger than that. He had seven people working with him. I came back and it was still the Bush administration. Eugene Kopp was a political appointee, but he had been a political appointee three times at USIA. He had served longer in USIA than many of the Foreign Service officers had been there. He liked the place. He respected it. He worked very closely with the establishment, and with the career people. I became his deputy for one year.

Q: Who was the director of USIA?

CALLAWAY: The director at that time was Henry Cato, who had beeBush's ambassador in Great Britain.

Q: He had been ambassador to Costa Rica?

CALLAWAY: It was Central America somewhere. He had been chief of protocol at the State Department. He had a distinguished career. He was a wealthy man from Texas and had been asked by Bush to take the place of probably the only director in recent history that I never met, Bruce Gelb, who had been a wealthy businessman who just didn't work out.

Q: You were back there after the Wick period and I've had people, Ted Kern and others, talk about how Wick was very difficult to deal with because he had a very low tolerance for information and you had to deal with him in a certain way. At the same time this guy was so good with Reagan that he could get all the money he wanted so that you were awash with money, more or less. When he left, that cornucopia sort of dried up. How did you find it sort of in the post-Wick era?

CALLAWAY: I heard more tales, as you have, than directly experienced them. There had been a family relationship between the Wicks and the Reagans and it not only was the men, but it was the two wives, Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Wick, who were perhaps even closer. Like you say, he could call him up and say, "Ron, I want to build WorldNet. Put me in for another 200 million."

I don't know what Cato's relationship with Bush was at all except being rewarded by going to the Court of St. James, which was a pretty nice reward. It was much more of a formal relationship with the White House. I think we were still relatively well funded compared to what was to come later, certainly in times that I experienced as we moved into the Clinton administration, but it wasn't that personal tie, or "Fine, Charlie, you do whatever you like." It was more of a formal relationship as a political appointee, head of an agency, and not the prime foreign agency.

Q: What were the issues that you and your principal werparticularly involved with during this year, '92 to '93?

CALLAWAY: I came back in August and it was elections; basically that was it. It was preparing for another Bush administration and all the hopes. One of the issues as we went into that fall was consideration of what the future of radios was going to be. By now the Soviet Union was gone. Do we need Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe any more? Do we need the Voice of America? Should we combine them? The issues that we are looking at today, and it was first resolved one way, and then it was resolved another. Should the Voice of America break away from USIA and become part of an international board of broadcasting? Should Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe be abolished entirely or brought in under the umbrella?

That was the issue that was going on even as the elections were going on. It didn't become one of the major election issues at all, but certainly one of the issues. USIA was the parent agency of Voice of America at the time, and was having a lot of influence over RL, RFE, Radio Marti, and TV Marti. There were constant accusations from the Hill about those two being totally ineffective, especially Television Marti, and being heavily influenced by the Cuban-American community down in Miami. A deceased man by the name of Jorge Mas was accused by the democrats of being the sole boss of the Marti radios. All those were issues that were concerning us as we moved into the elections of '92, which by November became less of a concern to the current administration.

Q: Charlie Wick had put a lot of emphasis on WorldNet. Could you explain what it was and by the time that you got back, about how you felt about its effectiveness?

CALLAWAY: WorldNet was an effort to establish something akin to the Voice of America, a television arm of the United States government which would either have direct satellite broadcasts into countries, or placement on local stations of television programs or collaborative television programs which would tell America's story. It was the old USIA slogan, present American culture, or American education, or American history, so that people would know about the United States.

Wick was very interested in having direct interviews. When we couldn't get an interview with the secretary of Defense about a particular policy with RAI television, Mr. Wick wanted to put it on WorldNet. We would gather a group of journalists in a studio either in the embassy or in one of the studios that we had paid for at an Italian television station, and have them ask questions by long distance satellite. It would not be a press generated event so much as an embassy or a USIA generated event. Wick's idea was that we want to get the story out and we want to get it out by the latest means possible, so let's move into television.

I think it was effective. I mentioned how hundreds of television stations were springing up as Italy moved away from a state monopoly over the television and radio. These people were desperately hungry to have something to broadcast and we could accommodate them. In other cases, where we were dealing with a lot of competition in free democratic information societies, it was less effective. It was a big effort of his and it was very controversial on the Hill. A lot of people criticized it and said it amounted to absolutely nothing. I think in a lot of cases people were trying to feather their nests and their careers by exaggerating the figures. Charlie Wick wanted to hear big figures about how many people were watching WorldNet.

I will go back to one of my earliest recollections as a junior officer back when I first came in, we had a thing called PPBS, Planning Programming Budgeting Systems.

Q: Wasn't it a matrix thing?

CALLAWAY: This was the thing that McNamara had established, cost effectiveness and so on at the Pentagon. The director of USIA at the time decided, "We are going to do this here. We are going to do this in USIA." It was very, very difficult to say if a fellow reads a book, is that one exposure, or a hundred, or if he discusses a television program with somebody? They gave it to the junior officers to put together. Exposures were the measurement. How effective is all of this? I took some figures and worked at them very diligently and took them into my boss down in Caracas, Venezuela. He looked at them and said, "Double them." Edward R. Murrow had a saying that it is very difficult to tell when a man changes his mind; no light goes off.

Q: Had WorldNet begun to sort of peter out by the time, at the enof the Bush administration?

CALLAWAY: It hadn't really petered out, but had much less focus on it. When Wick left and first Gelb came in, and then Cato came in as the director of USIA, it was still very much there but it was not that heavy focus with demand for results and statistics that Wick wanted.

Q: What was the attitude towards CNN, Ted Turner's commercial broadcast which was the equivalent to a WorldNet which is really very U.S.? It is supposedly international but people can certainly learn an awful lot of good and a lot of bad about the United States by watching this. What was the USIA attitude?

CALLAWAY: I think there were two attitudes. One, as you say they can learn an awful lot of good and bad. While WorldNet and all of USIA always claimed to be honest and to present a diversity of views; the basic thrust was to present obviously an overall favorable impression of a democracy with both good spots and bad spots. The other thing was that CNN was seen as a crisis channel. If you had a war going on then CNN was going to be on and people were going to watch it. WorldNet and the USIA information programs were a continual educational process. You didn't have to have bombs falling on Baghdad or Belgrade for your television set to be turned on, but the programs would be produced throughout and in that way a longer continuum of appreciation and knowledge about the United States would be fostered. People today say, "What do you need any of these for, you've got CNN?" Quite honestly people don't watch CNN when there is nothing big going on.

Q: Yes. In '93 there was a new Clinton administration in, what foyou?

CALLAWAY: There was a State Department officer, who had served as the administrative counselor of the embassy in London with Henry Cato, by the name of John Condayan, who had impressed Cato so much that he asked him to be the head of the administrative management section of USIA. He brought him back from London to fill in this position. John had been an administrative officer. He knew very little about USIA but he had grown to appreciate and admire the agency very much.

As I understood it (I wasn't privy to these conversations.) the Bush people went to the Clinton people and said, "Do you want to appoint a new director? What do you want to do? Do you want to send somebody over here? Do you want a team?" They just said, "No, you take care of it." The Bush people decided that they didn't want to stick around for that. I mean they stayed around until the inauguration in January, but at that point they asked John Condayan, as the highest ranking career person in USIA, to become the acting director. He was acting director from January until roughly July, for half a year. I served as long with John as I had with Gene Kopp. He was excellent. He was in a transition, and not an easy one.

Q: Was there a point where you got hit by the young activists oClinton? The young activists seemed to be coming out of the woodwork.

CALLAWAY: Yes, they certainly started to come onboard even while John was still acting director of the U.S. Information Agency. One, who was to become executive assistant to the new director, who was not named at the time, came onboard. The heads of various other offices within the agency also came on. The head of congressional relations was very quickly appointed, and so on.

That is why I admired Condayan so much. He was very even tempered about the whole thing. He was a professional. He made no bones that he was not a USIA person, he didn't have a long history, but he admired the institution and would try to work as closely as he could with the new people. I think John was disappointed. I think he hoped to stay on under the new administration and probably go back again to being the head of the management. He was a careerist, a professional, but he was a political appointee so it was "Bye, bye, John. He went back to the State Department for a tour and is now retired.

Joe Duffey, the new head of USIA, came onboard in May. He had been president of American University, and president of the University of Massachusetts before that. There was no deputy director so Condayan was acting. I was then the executive assistant to John during that interim period. He stayed until July when a political appointee, Penn Kimball, came in as deputy director.

This was a difficult transition because there was a lot of debate over who would become the director. Career people like Roz Ridgway were mentioned. Finally it came down to Joe Duffey. He was persuaded to leave American University. The Clinton connection goes way back to '63 or something like that, when Duffey ran for the Senate in Connecticut. Clinton, as a young politico - I think he was working on Senator Fulbright's staff at the time - went out and campaigned for him. This was a long relationship.

Penn Kimball had been with Freedom House, a private research organization which studies foreign countries every year and does a survey about where they stand on a dictatorship-to-democracy scale by various criteria such as free election, how many officials had been arrested, that sort of thing. He had been very active working for democracy in Central America. He had been on the board of directors of Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, so he had some broadcasting background.

Duffey mainly had an academic background. I think that they were seen as balancing each other on the information and cultural side of things. Also on political backgrounds, Duffey tended to be much more on the liberal side of the Democratic Party, and Kimball more on the neo-conservative side of things.

Q: What did you do in July of '93?

CALLAWAY: For three years, but under three different deputy directors, I continued as executive assistant to the deputy director. I was interviewed by Kimball. I thought for a while, as did my counterpart in the director's office, that we were to be replaced by political appointees. Both of them thought about it, and in both cases they asked the career people to stay on. The executive assistant to the director who became Duffey's executive assistant was a career civil servant and I was a career Foreign Service officer. They asked us both to stay on.

Basically what I did for the remaining two years was to introduce Penn Kimball to the U.S. Information Agency. He had never worked for the government before; it was always private sector, either political organizations or research organizations, or some kind of association like Freedom House. They always tended to be rather small organizations. He had never dealt with a large entity with thousands of people like the U.S. Information Agency.

It didn't work out this way between Kimball and Duffey at all, but traditionally the director/deputy at USIA was sort of like the ambassador/DCM relationship. The ambassador/director was the one who went to the Congress and dealt with the White House, and the deputy director of the U.S. Information Agency ran the place; he was kind of the deputy chief of mission, the management consultant. They both needed to learn a lot about just what this organization was that they were running. There was a lot of education.

Q: I would have thought it would be a very difficult period because here is an agency that had been living fairly well, and all of a sudden you were up, and it wasn't just Clinton, it was Congress and everybody else, we were cutting back and the agency was hit particularly hard. I would have thought that this team that was put in place would be not well equipped to deal with this sort of thing.

CALLAWAY: There was a lot of anxiety. The basis of the argument was that the Soviet Union had fallen, USIA was the Cold War propaganda arm of the U.S. government, and it didn't really need to exist anymore. Why are we spending all this money when we didn't have this big enemy out there anymore?The debate about broadcasting continued to rage - will it be nothing, something, or totally out of the agency? The whole matter of publications came up. We had a publication called America that we distributed in the Soviet Union for years. Most of the publications were disbanded or ceased to exist. For a few individual ones in India and in Japan, the country budgets themselves continued to fund the publications, but most of them were abolished over the anguished cries of people in Africa who said they don't have television sets and we need publications. It was an action which continued to be debated.

There was then the whole question about whether USIA will cease to exist at all, or will it be absorbed into the State Department, or will it be divided between its information arm and its cultural arm? First was the effort by Senator Jesse Helms, who with the Republican control of Congress became the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who wanted to bring AID, USIA, and ACDA all into the State Department and cut them back considerably as well. At first the administration's decision was that this wasn't going to happen, and then subsequently with more pressure being brought to bear, AID was brought more directly under the control of the State Department, ACDA was absorbed, and USIA, as of October 1, 1999 will be folded into the Department of State, which it was before 1953.

Q: Was the feeling that Jesse Helms' idea of cutting back USIA and putting it in State Department was it just government efficiency or was it that he didn't like USIA?

CALLAWAY: Number one, I don't think it is false to say that Helms is concerned about government efficiency, and that less government is better. I honestly think that Helms has less esteem for AID than he does for USIA. I think that Senator Helms' remarks about "give away" programs and U.S. foreign aid in supporting foreign countries, as opposed to legitimate concerns about social reform programs in his own country, are more strongly reflected in his attitudes than a feeling of a continuing need for the United States government to have a voice overseas. I think it was sort of half a loaf for him to win the battle for ACDA and USIA and to only get a certain degree of control of AID, moved into the State Department. I think Senator Helms probably has in mind that AID too will go that way in the future.

Q: This must have been a rather difficult time morale wise wasn't it?

CALLAWAY: Yes, it truly was especially in Washington. I think that in whatever agency, esprit de corps, morale, is always higher overseas. You are on the front lines whether it is a difficult post like Rome or a relatively easy post like Moscow that you are dealing with. I think in DC you are dealing with more bureaucratic things, and more administrative things. Yes, you do see the budget cutting back. You see the whole rationale for USIA being questioned.

Among people who worked at USIA, it was certainly not whether it would be abolished or not; I don't think anybody was in favor of that. Those of us who joined this agency appreciated and thought it had quite valuable the information and cultural-educational programs. The question was whether it would go into the State Department or not.

Once again you had a spectrum. You had the diehards of "never, never," and those who felt this was the future and let's go full steam ahead. Many of us saw that it was going to happen, that that is the way Congress was going to vote, and after the administration had done a couple of flip flops, it was going to support that.

I think our basic concern was to what extent the culture of the Department of State would be receptive to the kinds of programs that USIA ran? The concerned attitude was, "State Department people are always crisis oriented; they are always looking at the issue of the moment; they tend to focus on a political solution and they don't look at the long run. They don't think about the long-term impact of educational and cultural programs, and the need to have those." The fear is that if resources need to be shifted then they will be shifted away from those longer-term efforts.

The positive attitude is that the appreciation for long-term and short-term political, cultural, economic educational programs will all stay in place and that the argument for a more consistent policy in carrying out U.S. foreign policy under one roof will make logical sense and also bring about some fiscal savings, which I think the Congress was certainly looking for.

Q: What happened after you finished with this executive assistanjob?

CALLAWAY: I had experience in Latin America and had enjoyed tremendously being the cultural attachï¿½ in Rome, and the cultural attachï¿½ position in Madrid was coming open. I had some high-ranking contacts at that time so I said that's where I want to go and that's what I want to do. In the summer of '95 I went off to Madrid as the cultural attachï¿½.

Q: You were there from when to when?

CALLAWAY: I was there from '95 to '96, one year. Several things were happening. This was the year, as you will recall, that the government closed down. It was yet another year in which, as we had mentioned earlier, the resources and programs of USIA were being curtailed greatly. What we were doing was closing down cultural centers, closing down libraries, letting loyal and faithful Foreign Service national employees go. When the crisis of the government totally closing down around the end of '95/'96 happened, I was actually the acting public affairs counselor. My immediate boss was back on home leave in the States and I was suddenly dealing with all this stuff. I went home one day and said to my wife, "I am dismantling everything I have worked for years to build up. Before I become a bitter old man, I think I am going to retire."USIA had been offered a transition course, what was called a career transition course at the State Department. They had informed us that because USIA was probably going out of existence, this would be one of the last times that we could opt for this program. There was a friend of mine that I had worked with in educational exchange programs, who was back in Washington and who had set up a private organization, and he said, "Why don't you come back and work with me?" I told my wife, "It looks like the stars are crossing." Reluctantly, from the point of view of Spain which we enjoyed tremendously, and the programs which we were cutting back, I decided now is the time to retire. It was 30 years and a few months. I announced reluctantly to my boss who told me, "You go tell the ambassador. I'm not going to tell him that you are leaving." I came back in the summer of '96 and retired from the Foreign Service and went to work with FEMA.

Q: FEMA being what?

CALLAWAY: The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which responds to disasters in the United States and has its own public affairs reserve corps which sets up press centers, interviews with journalists, and provides general information about how the United States government is responding to disasters. There is a big difference and yet some similarities to my Foreign Service career.

Q: I guess this is a good time to quit.

End of interview